MASTER TRAVERS

by Florence M. Story

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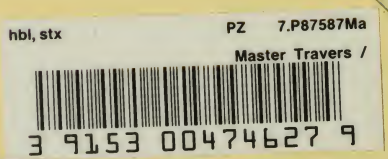

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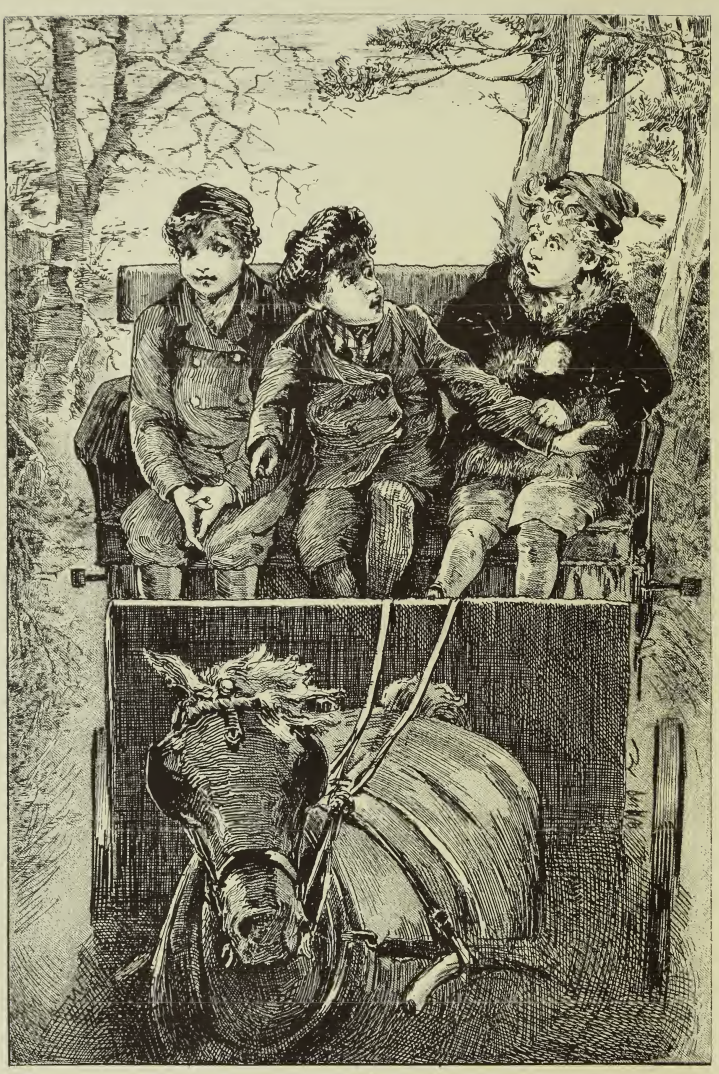

"Travers, do be quiet!" he cried. "See, you have dropped the reins!"

MASTER TRAVERS

"The next moment a tiny figure crawled out from under the table."

Page 21.

T. NELSON AND SONS
London, Edinburgh, and New York

MASTER TRAVERS

BY

Florence M. Story

Author of "Georgie Merton,"

&c. &c.

T. NELSON AND SONS

London, Edinburgh, and New York

1892.

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MASTER TRAVERS.

I.

ANTIMACASSAR TART.

DOVE COT is one of the prettiest dwellings in the neighbourhood of the small village of Kenworth. In summer-time the little garden is always gay with many-coloured flowers, the admiration of every passer-by; the canary sings joyfully in his cage, hung outside the drawing-room window, regardless of the smooth, sleek old cat coiled up just beneath him, well-nigh hid by the sweet-scented jasmine; and Rollo, the Newfoundland dog, is then generally to be found on the mat in the rose-covered porch, enjoying the sunshine, his head resting on his paws, ready to wag his tail when spoken to.

Even in winter-time Dove Cot is attractive to the eye. The walls are covered with ivy that reaches nearly to the roof, and that and the berries on the holly hedge give an idea of external warmth; whilst the red curtains in the windows, and the reflection of

cheerful fires on the panes, make one quite long to enter the snug and comfortable-looking abode.

At the time when our story commences it is the cold season, and a very severe winter it has been—so folks say. It is evening, about nine o'clock, and Mrs. Frederick Ellerton's pretty drawing-room is crowded with guests. A lady has just finished a song, and the buzz of conversation has once again recommenced. Mr. Ellerton is doing his best to entertain a very tall lady, who looks at him severely. She does not intend to do so, her look is nothing personal to her host; but she is a learned lady, a regular blue-stocking, versed in every 'ology, and has in consequence a great contempt for mankind in general. Mr. Ellerton is such a meek little man, and has such a nervous, timid manner, such a harmless, gentle expression, and such delicate, feminine-looking features, that Miss Jemima Macgregor, as she gazed at the scrupulously neat figure and shining bald head below her, could not help wondering if he possessed a single idea. As a matter of fact he did possess a good many, but he seldom showed them, he was so extremely diffident; and the only person almost who really appreciated Frederick Ellerton as he deserved was his wife Rosalie. Theirs had been a love match, and the affection that existed when they began life together did not decrease as year after year rolled by, but grew stronger and more binding.

Mrs. Ellerton was in many ways the exact antip-

odes of her husband. She was short, but she was so fat, quite a pudding—face, body, fingers, and toes, all were equally fat; and her bright blue eyes—for they were bright still—would almost have been lost to view had they not been unusually prominent. Then she talked so fast and smiled so sweetly on every one of her guests as she flitted—no, we will not say flitted—as she rolled hither and thither amongst them, with her new pink cap quite crooked on her head, and both gloves either split or buttonless, that no one seeing her could help thinking she must be one of the happiest, most good-humoured persons in the world. And so she was. She had no children of her own, but for now nearly four years she had had charge of her husband's nephew and niece—a boy of seven and a girl of four, who, being orphans, possessed no other home; and she was as devoted to them as any mother. No boy to her mind was so handsome and clever as Raymond, no girl so sweet and precocious as Dorothy. Even now she was regaling her guests with anecdotes of that precious Ray or that darling Dolly.

Meantime we will introduce our reader into the dressing-room belonging to Mrs. Ellerton's bedroom, where Dolly always sleeps in a pretty little bed with pink and white curtains. Nurse had safely placed her there and tucked her well in nearly an hour ago, when she and Ray had been sent upstairs from the drawing-room. Dolly was not sleeping, though the

night-light was very dim, and it was long after her usual bedtime. She was sitting up in bed, the flush of excitement on her pretty wee face, and was looking eagerly towards the half-closed door. In a few minutes it opened very softly, and Ray appeared in night-shirt, scarlet dressing-gown, and slippers.

"Are you ready, Dolly? I was *so* afraid you would go to sleep."

"Oh no, Way; I's quite awake."

"Well, then, get out of bed softly now. Take care you don't slip. That's right," said he, as the little girl alighted on the floor. "Now, where does nurse keep your dressing-gown and slippers?"

"Up there on the door is my dwessing-gown, Way. "I've got my thlippers here in my own bed."

"All right; stick them on quick, for we haven't got any time to waste. Nurse has gone down to her supper, but she might come up any minute, you know. Oh, bother! I can't get this thing down," said Raymond, who was standing on a chair endeavouring to unhook the dressing-gown. "I say, Dolly, won't a shawl do as well to keep you warm? Here's a nice one of Aunt Rosie's."

"No, no; I don't like Auntie Wosie's nasty old shawls. I *will* have my own nice dwessing-gown."

"Very well, then, if you lose the greengages through such stuff, Dolly, it won't be my fault, mind. Oh, I know, though—the tongs will get it down."

Off the chair he sprang, and very soon the beloved

garment was secured, and then after some small amount of trouble Dolly was enveloped in it. Suddenly she gave a little cry.

"Oh, you dirty boy! Look!" and she displayed a great black mark on the pale-blue sleeve, that had evidently been caused by the tongs.

"Never mind, Dolly; that's nothing. I can easily wash it out when we come up again; so don't make a fuss. You girls are so particular. Come, now; it's time to go down."

Dolly looked dolefully at the soiled sleeve, but thinking, as usual, that Ray must be right, she made up her mind not to cry as she had at first felt inclined to do; and taking hold of her brother's hand, she went with him to the top of the staircase.

"Sit down a minute on this step, Dolly, whilst I see if the drawing-room door is shut."

"Make haste, Way; it is a leetle wee bit cold out here."

In about a minute he was back again.

"Come on," he whispered; "there's no one about."

Down the stairs they ran, hand in hand, as quickly and as quietly as they could—Dolly lost one slipper on the way, but they did not stop to pick it up—right into the dining-room, the door of which was carefully closed behind them. The long table was laid out for supper, and presented a most brilliant appearance—what with the dishes of good things, the beautiful flowers, the shining plate, the glistening glass, and many lighted candles.

"Oh, how lubly!" exclaimed Dolly, opening her dark-blue eyes to their fullest extent. "O Way dear, do you weally think you *may* get the gweengages for me?"

"Of course, you little silly. I have made up my mind that you shall have them. Fancy nurse persuading Aunt Rosie to send us to bed. Here's the tart round here. I know it by the dish, for I saw cook put it in the oven. You will have to eat it up quick, though, or the people will be coming in. You see Ann has lighted the candles, and I know aunt told her to do that just before the people came in, for I heard her."

"O Way, I want my chair. I shan't be able to weach my plate."

"No, that you won't, and bother it. Why, your chair is gone. You must have one of these; and let me see—what can I put on it to make it high enough? Hollo! here's a footstool, and here's a table-cloth. There!" said he, rolling it up and helping Dolly to sit on it. "Now you will do first-rate. I will just stand on this other footstool myself to get to the dish better. Now for it."

Raymond stretched out his arm very carefully, drew the tart towards him, and armed himself with a knife. He put it under the paste at the edge, and commenced slowly to draw it along. Suddenly he stopped—an idea had struck him.

"I say, Dolly, you don't care for paste, do you?"

"No; I like gweengages best."

"Hurrah! Then I know what I will do," cried Raymond; and he proceeded cautiously to draw his knife right round the top of the pie-dish, until at length he had loosened the whole of the crust. Fortunately he had forgotten, when he first commenced to cut the pie, to cut through the paste from the centre before operating on the edge, so he was now enabled without much difficulty to remove the whole of it—the dish being a small-sized one—on to a plate near him without breaking it. "That's splendid!" he exclaimed. "Now, Dolly, hold your plate."

The little girl held out her plate with both hands, and soon had a helping of her favourite fruit before her.

"I want my pinny, Way."

"Oh, never mind that now. You must eat as quick as you can, and try not to make a mess."

"But I *must* have my pinny, Way dear, or I shall spoil my own dwessing-gown."

"You torment! I never can make you girls out. What's the difference, I would like to know, if you *do* spoil it? You can have another. But here's this antimacassar will do just as well. Stoop down; let me put it round your neck. There! are you satisfied now?"

"Yes, Way, thank you. I like my new pinny. You take some gweengages too, Way."

The two children had almost finished the feast,

when suddenly Dolly dropped her spoon and exclaimed in piteous accents,—

"O Way, dear Way, what s'all I do? We haven't said our gwace."

"No more we have," answered Ray with his mouth full; "and it's too late now. Why, I've just done."

"I s'all say mine now. Look, I've got a leetle bit more," she said, scraping her plate with her spoon, and holding it out to her brother. She then clasped her hands, shut her eyes quite fast, and having in a half-whisper said, "Thank God for what I'm going to weceive," she conveyed the contents of the spoon to her mouth; after swallowing which she said gravely, "Thank God for my vewy good dinner."

"Now, Dolly, we must make haste and get upstairs. Give me your dirty plate. I shall put both in the sideboard drawer; no one will see them there. And now for putting this paste on again. I say, Dolly, do you know we have eaten all the fruit. There isn't an atom left. It will be no end of a sell for whoever wants some."

"Put these f'owers in, Way," said Dolly, seizing hold of some geraniums from a vase in front of her.

"Not a bad idea; but this paste seems to go down in the middle, bother it! What a nuisance! We shall have to put something in to keep it up. We can put the flowers outside to hide where it is broken. There goes another crack! What a plague it is!"

"Put my new antimacassy pinny in to pwop it up, Way."

"Antimacassar tart!" laughed Raymond, at the same time untying the article in question from round Dolly's neck. "That will be a treat for Aunt Rosie's friends—such a one as they never had before in all their lives."

The antimacassar was crammed into the dish, the paste carefully arranged over it, and the pieces of scarlet geranium stuck in to conceal the damaged parts.

"What a bootiful tart, Way! I admire it vewy much."

"Yes indeed, Dolly, it looks scrumptious; and those flowers just match those red and white ones on that tongue over there. Push the footstools under, and give me that tablecloth. There,—that will do. We must make a bolt upstairs now. Come on."

But just at that moment the door was flung open, and Raymond perceived his uncle coming out of the drawing-room door opposite with a lady on his arm.

"They are coming in!" he cried in an agonized whisper. "Let's hide under the table and wait till they are gone. Oh, I *wish* we had been sharper!"

He dragged his little sister under the table, and bidding her on no account to make a sound, but to keep as quiet as a mouse, the two children watched the feet of the company as pair after pair appeared close to them, as if for their special amusement.

Dolly was so engaged in contemplating the various sorts and kinds of feet, that Raymond had no difficulty in keeping her as quiet as his heart could wish.

Meantime supper proceeded, and the guests seemed much to enjoy the good things set before them. Mr. Ellerton and some of the other gentlemen did not remain in their places all the time, but wandered round the table, waiting on first one and then another. At length the more solid dishes were neglected, and the sweets were in general request. It so happened that Miss Macgregor was standing opposite to the unfortunate tart.

"What may I fetch you, Miss Macgregor?" inquired Mr. Ellerton, as he saw her put down her knife and fork. "Will you have some trifle—some cream—a little jelly? What would you like?"

"Thank you. I think I should like some of this tart in front of me; it looks so inviting with those pretty geraniums. I wonder though, Mr. Ellerton, that you can spare such beautiful flowers for the decoration of dishes. It seems almost like waste."

"Mrs. Ellerton always attends to these matters," he replied meekly. "But in truth, Miss Macgregor, I do not see why flowers should not be placed anywhere where they gratify our love of beauty, as much as in the hands of a botanist, who will drag their delicate blossoms to pieces in order— But, but—ahem! ha! this tart is very strange. Ahem! There must be some mistake;" and Mr. Ellerton peered into the dish

with his eye-glass, spoon in hand. Miss Macgregor looked in through her spectacles; the rector's wife, on the other side, did the same with her naked eyes. Mr. Ellerton had cut a piece of the paste and placed it on Miss Macgregor's plate. He had then intended to give her some fruit, but had spooned up instead a piece of soft muslin-looking material.

"Take it right out, Mr. Ellerton. That is the only thing to do," said Miss Macgregor decidedly.

Mr. Ellerton, obedient to this command, endeavoured to draw it gradually out, vainly imagining that the paste was safely secured to the dish. His horror, then, may well be imagined when the crust slipped off, and the next moment he held up between the spoon and fork in mid air a soft Indian muslin antimacassar, embroidered in "liberty" colours, all stained with juice. The assembled guests could not help seeing it, and a general laugh was raised.

Poor Mr. Ellerton! he was so overcome that he forgot to put it down, and continued to hold it between the spoon and fork, and to stare at the empty dish with a most comical look of distress on his face. Mrs. Ellerton had left her place, and was hurrying up to him, when skutter, skutter was heard beneath the table, and the next moment a tiny figure crawled out, and going up to the astonished lady, said in the most solemn voice,—

"Auntie Wosie, please will you give me some silk, long 'tockings, with sweet leetle holes all over them?"

The visitors stared in utter amazement at the little girl, as, wrapped in her blue dressing-gown with one wee bare foot peeping out, and her pretty golden curly locks floating in wild disorder round her, she stood making her request. Then suddenly the absurdity of the scene seemed to strike them, and one and all, even Miss Macgregor, laughed right merrily. Mr. Ellerton, who had dropped the spoon and fork on Dolly's appearance, laughed because his wife laughed, but he did so nervously. He was unaccustomed to two shocks coming so close one upon the other: they upset him. Mrs. Ellerton sank into a chair, and taking Dolly upon her lap, began to question the child as to the meaning of her not being safely asleep in bed, where she was supposed to be.

"I wanted some gweengages, Auntie Wosie, and dear Way was a good bwother and gave me some."

"Ray! Where is Ray?" exclaimed Mrs. Ellerton.

"Way is under the table, Auntie Wosie. S'all I tell him you want him?"

But Raymond had heard his name mentioned, and now scrambled out.

"Well, I never!" gasped his uncle, as he beheld the nephew of whom he was so proud attired in a scarlet dressing-gown, standing up boldly confronting his guests.

Raymond's hair was all rough too, and his brown eyes seemed dancing with mischief as he hastened up to his sister's side, and taking her hand, said, "Oh, it's

all right, auntie; you needn't fear. I only just brought Dolly down to have some greengages, because that cross old cook would not let her have any yesterday, and made her cry; and I thought if we did not come down to-night to get them, the people would eat them all up, you know."

"Hush, my dear boy! you ought not to have come down like this. You—" But Mrs. Ellerton could not lecture the children; it was impossible. The company were all laughing, so she laughed too; and kissing them both, sent for nurse to take them once more to bed. Whilst they were waiting, some one asked how the antimacassar came to find its way into the pie-dish.

"That was Dolly's idea, and putting the flowers on too," said Raymond in a proud tone. "The paste broke, you see, so I thought it was precious sharp of her to think of it; don't you, auntie?"

"I scarcely know," replied Mrs. Ellerton, almost at a loss what to say.—"But Dolly, my pet, I really am shocked at your coming downstairs in your night-dress, and with bare tooties like this;—and you too, Ray."

"I'm not in my night-dwess, Auntie Wosie; I've got on my own dwessing-gown, and I lost my thlipper on the stairs."

Just then nurse came in, and the two children, after having said good-night to most of the company, left the room hand in hand.

Of course, when they had departed, the conversation naturally fell on their performance and their comical appearance.

"That darling Ray!" gushed Mrs. Ellerton, "he looked *so* handsome I had not the heart to scold him to-night; and then it was *so* nice of him to get into a scrape to please his little sister."

"Yes," said one lady, who had eleven children of her own—six boys and five girls—"it was *very nice* in idea perhaps; but you see, my dear Mrs. Ellerton, it would never do to encourage children in such performances. It might be very awkward sometimes, and one would never know where they would end."

"Depend upon it, the young monkey took care to have a good helping himself. That little Dolly could never have eaten the whole dish of fruit," said a good-tempered old naval captain. "Take my word for it, Ellerton, that boy is a regular pickle, and will give you a sight of trouble before he's grown up; not that I say a word against him, for, as you know, he is no end of a favourite with me."

"To my mind," said a prim-looking old maid, "the proper thing—though it was, I confess, most difficult not to smile at the time—would have been to have given them each a good whipping!"

"No, thank you," replied Mrs. Ellerton laughing, "that's not my way; I'm not the old woman who lived in a shoe."

"And I agree with my wife," put in Mr. Ellerton.

II.

RICHES.

ONE morning a few days after the children's cruel treatment of the greengage tart, when Mr. Ellerton came down to breakfast, he found his better half in a state of great excitement over a letter with a deep black edge addressed to himself.

"O Fred dear, just look at this! Who can it be from? Do make haste to open it. Who do we know living at Winsdale?"

Mr. Ellerton immediately broke open the envelope, and found it to contain an undertaker's card, inviting him to be present at the funeral of his late sister's husband's eldest brother, Ray and Dolly's uncle.

"Poor old man!" he said; "his must have been a very lonely life, living in that big house all by himself.—Your cap is crooked, dear.—His only son was in the navy. I wonder if he is at home now."

"*I* wonder if he has remembered Ray and Dolly in his will, Fred. You see, my dear, he ought to, because, except his son, he had no other near relations. He has not seen the children since poor Dorothy's

death, 'tis true, but still he can scarcely have forgotten their existence."

"No, my love, no; I quite agree with you. You are a wonderful woman, Rosalie. You always think out things that never enter my brains."

"It was you taught me how to do so, then, Fred dear," laughed his wife. "You know what a silly little thing I was when you married me. Ah! here come the children."

Mr. Ellerton went to Winsdale to attend Mr. Travers's funeral, and then learned that about a month previous to his death the news had reached him of the sudden death of his son at sea, which had been such a shock to him that he had never recovered it. Mr. Ellerton had been invited to the funeral by the lawyer, and learned from him that Mr. Travers had made a will the contents of which would be made public after the funeral. The ceremony was as private and quiet as possible, out of respect to the expressed wishes of the deceased. He was followed to the church, where he was placed by the side of his forefathers in the family vault, only by Mr. Ellerton, Vivian Forbes, a distant cousin, the lawyer, the doctor, and one or two gentlemen of the neighbourhood with whom he was best acquainted, and of course by the whole cavalcade of his servants, who had one and all been much devoted to the old man. The solemn service was over, dust had been committed to dust, ashes to ashes, and the party of mourners were as-

sembled in the stately-looking library to hear the will read. Poor Mr. Ellerton! he wanted his wife near him; and she most probably would have expected to hear what he heard. His was a nervous constitution. He could not bear surprises, even pleasant ones; and the words that fell now on his wondering ears were in truth a cause of astonishment, for the simple reason that the truth had never once occurred to his mind. There were legacies to different old servants and two or three well-known charitable institutions, a legacy of £2,000 to Vivian Forbes, another £2,000 to himself, and then the whole of the rest of the large property was left to Raymond Marmaduke Travers, his heirs and assigns for ever, £1,000 a year being made chargeable upon the estate for the use of Dorothy Muriel Travers during her life-time. Then it was appointed that Winsdale Hall should be kept up as it was at the present time until Raymond's coming of age, in order that he might know it as his home from childhood; and Mr. Ellerton and Vivian Forbes were named executors of the will and guardians of the young heir. A special request was made in the will, and also in letters that the lawyer had handed to them, that one or the other should always be in residence at the Hall during Raymond's minority.

The reading was over, the lawyer and other strangers had departed, and Frederick Ellerton and Vivian Forbes were left alone together. They

scarcely knew each other, having met only once or twice before, and it was hardly likely that a proud, stern man of the world like Vivian Forbes would expect to find a congenial companion in Frederick Ellerton.

"This will has startled me very much," at last almost gasped Mr. Ellerton. "I never realized that Raymond was the next heir to Winsdale. Till yesterday I never even knew of his cousin's death."

"Indeed!" replied his companion. "May I ask what kind of a lad he is? As we are joint-guardians, I suppose I ought to know something about him. How old is he?"

"Just seven, and as fine and noble-hearted a child as one could wish to see. He is clever, too, for his age. I am very proud of my nephew, Mr. Forbes."

"Hum! it is but natural, I suppose. As for me, I never see anything specially interesting in such mere children; they are all so much the same to my mind. I cannot for the life of me imagine what can have made my poor cousin appoint me as guardian, for I am about the last man fitted for the post."

"I do not think you will find Raymond and Dorothy exactly the same as other children," replied Mr. Ellerton, with it may be a slight accent of indignation in his tone. "You must wait till you see them before you give that as your opinion."

"Well, well. I daresay they are very nice, and that you have brought them up in the way they

should go, and all that kind of thing; and I hope you will agree to go on with it. You are used to the children, and I am not, and are sure to do better for them than I could. A bachelor cannot be expected to understand such matters. Do, I entreat you, agree to make this your home. I shall not want to disturb you, I can assure you. I hate a stationary life. I can come and look you all up here occasionally when I am in England, you see, and then we can talk over any business matters that may have to be attended to."

"I must consult with Mrs. Ellerton about this arrangement first," replied Mr. Ellerton. "I seldom act alone without finding out her wishes beforehand. She is devoted to the children, so I do not anticipate any objection; but, of course, Winsdale Hall will be a far greater responsibility for her to look after than Dove Cot."

"Oh, if I know anything of ladies, that will not be an objection, so I shall hope to have the pleasure of making Mrs. Ellerton's acquaintance here early next month. I must be up in town again to-morrow morning; but Forster says I must come down again about signing all those papers before I am off to Rome the end of next month. But you are not going? Surely you will not leave me to dine here alone to-night!"

"I am very sorry," said Mr. Ellerton nervously; "but my train goes in half-an-hour, and I would not

miss it on any account. The carriage has come round. Good-bye."

It is breakfast time the next morning. Mr. and Mrs. Ellerton are engaged in an eager conversation about the events of the previous day. They have decided that the children must at once be acquainted with their good fortune, and are now trying to decide which shall tell them of it.

"It would come far better from you, Fred dear. Raymond knows you have been to his uncle's funeral, for I told him so yesterday."

"Yes; but Rosalie, my love, you would tell them in a much nicer way than I should. I should not know in the least how to begin.—Your cap is crooked, my dear."

"Oh, is it?—Well, then, as you wish it, Fred, of course I will tell them. I wonder where the children are? Dolly's bread and milk will be quite cold. They have been up for ages, I know."

"I heard their voices just now, so I daresay they will be here in a minute. What did they say when you told them of poor Travers's death?"

"Oh, Ray only said, 'I hope Uncle Fred won't stay away long. What a plague that old uncle wanting to die just now!' And then that sweet Dolly—she was sitting on my lap—looked up, and said so seriously to him, 'You are a naughty boy, Way, to talk like that. The old uncle wanted to die 'cause

God sent his angel to cawy him up to heaven; and you know, Way dear, God would be dweadfully cwoss if the bwight angel was to be kept waiting.' Dear little thing! I thought it was such a beautiful idea about the angel."

"So it was, Rosalie. Our Dolly is very thoughtful for such a mite.—Your cap is on hind part before, I think, love."

"That she is—I mean, it is. I never looked in the glass when I put it on. And Fred, you know Ray thinks more than most boys of his age. We ought to be very proud of our children, Fred. Ah! here they come at last.—Better late than never, Ray. Don't upset my coffee, dear boy! There! those are kisses enough. Now go and wish uncle good-morning. He came home last night when you were asleep in bed.—Sit down quietly, Dolly my pet. Are you so taken up with uncle that you won't speak a word to your poor old auntie?"

"I'm coming, Auntie Wosie. I've got a pwesent to give Uncle Fwed. I got them for him my own self."

"What are they, my darling?" asked Mr. Ellerton, looking suspiciously at Dolly's pinafore, which she kept all bundled up.

"Such dear leetle tweasures, uncle! Give me six lubly kisses, and shut your eyes, and then you s'all have them."

Mr. Ellerton gave her the demanded number of kisses, and then shut his eyes.

"Let's see, Dolly," said Ray. "What in the world have you got? You never told me a word about it."

"You must not come here, Way. You must go and sit down pwoperly to your bweakfast, like Auntie Wosie told you.—Now, uncle, shut your eyes quite tight, and I will put them on your plate."

Dolly then, standing on tip-toe, proceeded to place upon her uncle's plate, one by one, three tiny kittens about two days old.

"Open your eyes, Uncle Fwed, and look quick!"

Mr. Ellerton did look at the three little dark moving animals; and then springing to his feet, exclaimed,—

"Good gracious, child! where did you get those creatures from?—Rosalie, be so kind as to have them removed at once. I could not touch them. Bah!"

Ray was in fits of laughter, both at the disgust of his uncle and the comical look of distress on Dolly's face.

"Never mind, Dolly," said he. "Take the kittens back to Smut; she likes them better than uncle. Hark! there she is mewing for them."

"Yes, Dolly," added Mrs. Ellerton; "run back with them to poor Smut. Uncle is very much obliged to you for thinking of him—aren't you, uncle?—but he is hungry, and wants his breakfast now. Hold out your pinny, dearie, and let me put them in."

Dolly obeyed; and as soon as the kittens were safely in her keeping, she marched out of the room,

saying to herself, "Poor leetle kitties! Uncle does not love you; but Dolly Dot does, so don't cwy about it, you leetle darlings."

She soon returned, and breakfast went on with no further interruptions. As soon as it was over, Mrs. Ellerton seated herself in an easy-chair by the fire, and taking Dolly on her lap, said,—

"Come here, Ray dear. I have got something important to tell you."

"I don't want to come unless it's something nice, auntie, 'cause I want to watch Rollo and the next door cat. It's a sight, I can tell you."

"Indeed it is something far better than that, Ray," said his uncle; "so you had best come at once and hear what your aunt has to say to you."

Raymond slowly sauntered up to the fireplace, and stood by his uncle's side, with his back to the fire, his head in the air, and his hands in his breeches pockets.

"Ray, my dearest boy," at once began Mrs. Ellerton, speaking very rapidly, "you know that Uncle Fred went to Uncle Marmaduke's funeral yesterday. Well, he found that poor Uncle Marmaduke's son died at sea about a month ago, and that—"

"Oh, if you are going to tell me about some more people being dead, I don't want to listen, Aunt Rosie! You know I hate hearing about dead people," exclaimed Raymond, rudely interrupting his aunt.

"Of course you do, Ray; but I am going to tell you something more that you will like, only you

must have a little more patience, dear boy. Well, when Uncle Marmaduke heard that his poor son was dead, he made a will and left all his property to—"

"I don't care about wills and property! What's property?" muttered Raymond impatiently, kicking about his legs.

Mr. Ellerton now put his hand on the boy's shoulder, and said in a quiet though decided tone,—

"Raymond, if you do not keep quiet and treat your aunt with more respect, you will have to leave the room. Look at your little sister, how good she is."

"All right, uncle; I will behave properly. But aunt promised to tell me something nice, and she has not told me anything all this time."

"Well, Ray, I will tell you then. This Uncle Marmaduke has left his house and money and all he had to you, and instead of being a poor little boy, you are now a very rich one. There! isn't that something nice?"

"But, uncle—auntie, I don't understand. Why should this uncle have given all his belongings to me, and not to Dolly too? He was a very horrid fellow not to think of her, that he was.—Never mind, Dolly Dot; you shall go halves with me."

"But Uncle Marmaduke did not forget Dolly; he has made her a rich girl too, Ray."

"Oh, then it's no end of a lark! I say, auntie, will there be money enough to get that knife with

six blades in Brown's window? And I know Dolly has wanted a perambulator for her dolls for ages and ages. Are you sure there will be money enough to get that too? Nurse said it would cost a mint of money."

"Yes," said Mrs. Ellerton, laughing; "there will be plenty to buy both knife and perambulator. But what has Dolly to say to being made a rich little girl?"

"I a wich girl, Auntie Wosie! How much money s'all I have?"

"Oh, a lot, my pet—more than you can count. And then, children, there's another piece of news for you. We are going to leave Dove Cot the end of this month, and are all going to live in Ray's own house. What do you think of that?"

"I won't be a wich girl, Auntie Wosie, and I won't go away from Dove Tot!" cried Dolly, on the verge of tears. Then slipping off her aunt's lap, she clasped her little fat arms round her uncle's knees, saying, in a piteous tone, "Please, don't send me away, Uncle Fwed dear; let me stay in Dove Tot with you and Auntie Wosie!"

"But I am coming with you, my dear child, and so are auntie and nurse; and we are all going to live in Ray's beautiful home," said Mr. Ellerton, stooping and kissing the little upturned face. "We shall be so happy there, and you will have such lots of nice things—ponies to ride, and I don't know what besides."

Dolly seemed satisfied with his assurance, and seated herself most demurely on the footstool by her aunt, her hands folded on her lap, and an expression of thought on her face.

Mr. Ellerton rang the bell for prayers, and for a short time no more could be said. Hardly, however, had the door closed after the retiring servants, before Raymond began in an excited tone,—

"Uncle, if I am really rich, of course I must have some money directly. There are several things I *must* get at once."

"Are there, dear boy?" said Mr. Ellerton; and then obeying a nod from his wife, which nearly sent her cap off her head, he put his hand in his pocket, and pulling out a sovereign, handed it to Raymond, saying, "Here's some money for you then. Be careful and don't waste it; for remember, Ray, when people are rich they are answerable to God for the use they make of their riches."

The sight of the gold in his hand seemed to cause Raymond to more fully realize the change in his fortunes. He gave a great shout of delight, and exclaimed,—

"Oh, thank you, uncle! This *is* jolly! I never possessed more than half-a-crown before in all my life. Can Dolly and I go into Kenworth to spend some of it?"

Just then Dolly stood up, and putting her head on one side and her hands behind her back, she said in a low tone,—

"Uncle Fwed, Auntie Wosie said Dolly Dot was a wich girl too."

"Oh yes, uncle, please give Dolly some money;—or, Dolly, I can give you some of mine."

"No thank you, Way; that is your money. Uncle Fwed will give me some for my own."

"*Combien?*" said Mr. Ellerton in an undertone to his wife, who for answer extended five fat fingers and nodded her head so vigorously that her unfortunate cap took another journey.

"Your cap is crooked, my love.—Here, Dolly, are five shillings for you. A lot of money for such a little body. Mind you take care of it."

"Thank you, Uncle Fwed. I'm vewy much obliged to you;" and then Dolly reseated herself on the footstool, holding her five shillings tightly in her hand.

Conversation now turned upon Winsdale Hall, and Mr. Ellerton described it as well as he could after his short acquaintance with it; and at the same time he endeavoured to explain to Raymond that though it would be all his own, and no one could take it from him, still until he was twenty-one he would not be his own master, or able to do entirely as he liked—a mystery that Raymond did not at all seem to comprehend.

"Uncle," he asked after a few minutes' thought, "shall I be as rich as Sir Harry Mortimer up at Lynwood Park?"

"Yes, Raymond; your income will be more than

his when you are a man. Yes; you will certainly be richer than Sir Harry."

"Then, uncle," exclaimed the boy in passionate tones, jumping up and stamping his feet, "I declare it is a positive shame! Do you mean I mayn't have a gun and drive a four-in-hand like Sir Harry till I am twenty-one? I never heard of such a thing! It is shameful—abominable! I won't stand it—no, that I won't!"

Mr. and Mrs. Ellerton could not help smiling at his indignation; which seemed to irritate him still more: but when his uncle said quietly,—

"Stop, Raymond; not another word! You do not understand what you are talking of," and his aunt added,—

"Come, come, Ray my boy; don't be such a silly goose! Wait till you get to Winsdale, and then see what you will do. But now it is getting quite late, and as you are to have a few days' holiday from to-day, I think the very best thing you can both do is to get your things on and go with nurse into Kenworth before luncheon, to get those important articles you said just now you wanted at once,"—

Raymond's attention was immediately diverted from his grievance, and with a look of bright animation on his face he said,—

"Oh yes, auntie. I had forgotten my sovereign. We will be off like steam-engines.—Come on, Dolly Dot!"

About half-an-hour later the two children were walking on either side of nurse along the hard frosty road that led to Kenworth, chattering away to her about all their plans, and all the purchases they intended to make. Raymond had his sovereign safe in his purse in the inside pocket of his greatcoat; but Dolly would not trust her treasure in any pocket, and still held it fast in her hand. Nurse let the children talk on. It amused her to hear of all they had already made up their minds to do when once they were located in Winsdale. She knew the Hall well, for she had been under-nurse to their father and his brother, and all the best years of her life had been spent there; so, consequently, no place in her eyes equalled it, and no one could have rejoiced more than she at the thought of Raymond's having succeeded to the property.

On the way to Kenworth they met a beggar woman, who was endeavouring to soothe a little girl of about three years old, whom she was carrying in her arms, and who was crying bitterly. By her side, holding on to her tattered skirt, was a boy about a year younger than Raymond, looking blue with cold, as well he might, for he had scarcely anything worthy of the name of clothes to cover his body. The woman stopped and asked nurse to give her something—only a copper she would be grateful for. They had had no food that day, and they were well-nigh starving. Nurse told her she had nothing to give her; and just then a great friend

of nurse's—Lady Mortimer's maid—came up, and of course it was only natural that she should at once wish to tell her of Raymond's accession of wealth. The maid had with her her mistress's favourite dog, a huge St. Bernard, and Raymond immediately turned his attention to the handsome docile animal. Dolly meanwhile had not taken her eyes off the unfortunate beggar woman, who was slowly dragging her weary footsteps onwards. She had gone only a few yards when she stopped and looked round. Dolly, unheeded by nurse, whose back was turned, ran up to her. "Are you vewy hungwy, poor woman?" she asked, looking up into the woman's face with her serious eyes.

"Yes indeed, missie; I haven't tasted a bit of nothing since yesterday."

"Nor that leetle boy, nor that leetle girl?"

"Yes, missie; some kind soul did give 'em each a crust o' bread this morning, but 'twas scarcely more than a mouthful apiece for 'em.—'Ush, 'ush, Maggie! stop crying now whilst I'm a-talkin' to the young lady," added the woman, addressing the sobbing child in her arms.

"Here is some money for you, poor woman," said Dolly, taking two shillings from her precious store and holding it up to the woman. "I'm so vewy sowwy for you. Will you please go quick and buy some nice bweakfast?"

"Oh, may God bless you, missie!" exclaimed the

woman, taking the money with her well-nigh benumbed fingers. Before she could say any more, Dolly had held out another shilling to the little boy, saying,—

"There is a shilling for you, leetle boy. Ask your mother to get you some more bweakfast. And here is another one for that poor leetle baby girl, and then she won't cwy any more."

The beggar woman began pouring forth a volume of blessings and thanks, when Dolly, who had been looking steadfastly at her last shilling, interrupted her by saying,—

"Poor woman! if I give you this last one, will you buy some toap and some hot water, and wash all your faces? You look *so* dirty. I always get into my hot barf before I have my bweakfast."

A half bitter smile broke over the woman's face as she said,—

"There was a time once, missie, when I'd 'ave been very angry if any one'd called me *dirty!* But now *I'm* so, and my children are so, and I knows it. Thank you, my dear little lady, but I can't take all your money from you. You've given us enough, and more than enough, to keep us from starvin', and to get us a warm at some fireside. No thank you, missie; I can't take no more from you."

"But you s'all have it! I'm Dolly Twavers, and I'm a wich girl, and Auntie Wosie told me so. You weally *must* take it; and I weally must wun after nurse. Look, she is going. Good-bye."

Nurse and her friend had found it rather cold standing still so long, so the friend had agreed to walk on with her for a short distance. They were both so engaged in their conversation that they had not noticed Dolly's absence; and Raymond also had been entirely oblivious of everything and everybody whilst playing with "Leo." Dolly rejoined the party, and was soon walking on one side of the big dog and Raymond on the other; but being a reticent child, she did not even tell her brother what she had been doing. After a little time they reached the toy-shop in Kenworth. Raymond marched in first, and going up to the shopwoman, said, in a very consequential tone,—

"I've come to buy a lot of things. What have you got to sell?"

"Oh, there is a good choice, sir, if you will please to look about a bit."

"Dolly Dot, I say, just come here," said Raymond; whilst nurse, seating herself, began to chat with the shopwoman, for she had been particularly told by Mrs. Ellerton on no account to interfere with the children's purchases, but to leave them entirely to themselves.

"Now, isn't that a stunner, Dolly! Look, it has even a corkscrew, and—why, yes—there are seven blades! I must get one of these; but I want to see about my presents first. I want to get something for uncle and aunt; don't you? Just see if you can find out anything they would like."

"I think auntie would like that box of tea fings, Way. Look, what a dear leetle teapot."

"Why, you silly, those are only dolls' tea things. Now, this might do for uncle," said he, taking up a very large glass ink-bottle. "How much is this, please?" he asked of the shopwoman.

"Three and sixpence, sir," was the answer.

"Well, then, I will have that.—You take care of it, nurse. I shall have some more things presently."

Raymond went on for some time choosing various things, until at last he said,—

"Now, it's your turn, Dolly. What are you going to get?"

"Oh, I will have this dear leetle kettle, Way; and this wee, wee dollie in the barf, and that Wed Widing-Hood for Auntie Wosie, and — and — but — O Way!" and then suddenly Dolly burst into a flood of tears.

"Why, Dolly, what's that for?" exclaimed Raymond in blank astonishment, whilst nurse and the shopwoman hurried up to know what was the matter. At last, between her sobs, Dolly murmured,—

"I—I—can't have nuffing. I've got no money."

"What!" cried nurse and Raymond almost in a breath; "have you lost it?"

"No, no, I've not lost it; and now I'm a silly, naughty girl!—O Nanna, I gave two of my shillings to the poor woman to buy some bweakfast, and one to the poor leetle boy with the big holes in his boot,

and one more to the poor little cwying girl—and—and—" She could not go on.

"Well, I never! I never saw you do it. Really there is no being up to you children. That makes four shillings," said nurse. "What became of the fifth, I would like to know?"

"I—I—O dear Nanna, don't be cwoss, for I am 'shamed to cwy; and I thought I would be like the good 'Maritan in the big Bible, and I gave the shilling to the poor woman to buy—to buy—some toap and hot water to wash all their faces. They were so vewy, vewy dirty."

Neither woman could help smiling at the fate of the last shilling; but Ray said cheeringly, "Never you mind, Dolly Dot! Dry your eyes; here's my handkerchief. That's it. You shall have some of my money to get your things. I saw that woman and children. They did look awfully bad, I must say. I can't make out, though, how you managed to give them your money without our knowing."

Dolly soon cheered up; the purchases were completed, and before long the children were on their way home, carrying a big parcel between them. It would be unnecessary almost to tell how much Mr. and Mrs. Ellerton appreciated their little presents, nor yet how for long after the tears *would* come into Aunt Rosie's eyes when she thought of the fate of Dolly's first five shillings.

III.

THE YOUNG SQUIRE AND HIS GUARDIANS.

"I SAY, uncle, is Cousin Vivian coming this week or next?" inquired the youthful owner of Winsdale Hall one morning about six weeks after the death of old Mr. Travers. The four were sitting at breakfast in the large and spacious dining-room. Mrs. Ellerton was presiding over the tea and coffee; Dolly, in a high chair near her aunt, was enjoying her bread and milk; Mr. Ellerton sat at the side of the table; whilst Raymond, in the seat of honour, was doing his best to look as big and important as he could—a somewhat difficult task for so small a figure in the large, curiously-carved oak arm-chair.

"Indeed I don't know, Ray. In his last letter he was at Oxford, and seemed very uncertain about his movements; but he is sure to come here before he goes abroad again. Perhaps we may hear from him to-day."

Just then the door opened, and a servant entered with the post-bag. He was about to take it to Mr. Ellerton, when Raymond stopped him, saying in an authoritative tone,—

"Bring the bag to me, Morrison. You forget that this is *my* house, and *I* am the master. I told you so yesterday."

With a smile lurking round the corners of his mouth the man obeyed; and Raymond, with a very grand air, took a key from his waistcoat pocket and unlocked the bag. It contained only a couple of newspapers and one letter. Raymond looked at the letter, and then, passing it on to his uncle, said, "That's got the Oxford post-mark, so I expect it is from Cousin Vivian. Do open it, quick. I want awfully to know when he is coming."

"Why should you be so anxious about it, dear boy? You don't know him."

"That doesn't make a scrap of difference, uncle. Don't you understand he is *my* first visitor? so it's quite natural I should want to know when to expect him."

"But, my dearest Ray," laughed Mrs. Ellerton, "you forget what your uncle told you—that Mr. Forbes is as much your guardian as he is, and can come here whenever he likes, whether you invite him or not."

"Humph! but I intend to take jolly good care he does only come here when I want him, Auntie Rosie, I can tell you. It's all very well to have uncle for my guardian, as you call it, but I couldn't put up with a strange fellow I know nothing of—who doesn't know my ways even—towering it over me. He isn't a tutor or schoolmaster even, who has to teach

me, or anything sensible like that. He will be wanting to pry into everything, and see that I am a good boy, I suppose. Is that letter from him, uncle?"

"Yes, Ray. He writes only a few lines just to say he cannot well fix upon a particular day or hour, but hopes to come to us one day this week. That's all.—Rosie, you had better tell Mrs. Bassett to have a room prepared for him at once, as you see he may be here at any moment."

"He must be a strange man, Fred dear, not to be able to arrange his plans better. What age did you say he was?"

"Let me see—I should not think he can be much less than three or four and thirty.—Your cap, love! That's straight now.—Yes, I agree with you: he must be of a singular disposition. I know little of him; but people tell me that those who are fortunate enough to know him really well are devoted to him, and say he is a most sterling character. He loves travelling, and seldom stays in one place long; but he is a difficult man to know well, I hear, as with strangers he is inclined to retire so very much into his shell."

"That's not a lively description, uncle," said Raymond; "so I hope to goodness he won't take it into his head to come bothering here much.—Have you finished, auntie? I want to go round to the stables to have a look at the ponies."

"You have only quarter of an hour, Ray, before

it is time to begin lessons; so be off with you, and mind you do not keep uncle waiting."

Prayers were read at Winsdale before breakfast, so there was nothing to detain the boy, and away he flew. Mr. Ellerton had been in the habit of taking Raymond to study with him for three or four hours every day for now nearly two years, and he had decided not to give up this custom when they came to Winsdale. He was intensely fond of teaching, and took the greatest pride in his pupil's attainments—far more than his pupil did himself; for though singularly forward and intelligent for his age, he was extremely careless over his work, and often tried his uncle's patience severely. Mr. Ellerton was looking forward to Mr. Forbes's visit to talk over with him the subject of their ward's education; for he was desirous himself, both for his own sake and the lad's, that the plan he had hitherto adopted should be continued until the time arrived when school-life should be a necessity. Raymond was a thorough boy, and it was not probable that he could be kept at home as he grew older. Already he had asserted his independence in a most marked manner on every possible opportunity; but then, as his ever indulgent aunt said, it was but natural that just at first his head should be slightly turned by the new position in which he found himself placed. The servants, accustomed for so many years to the quiet monotony of the old squire's life, rejoiced to hear the merry sounds

of childish voices in the grand stately rooms, and the patter of their footsteps up and down the long galleries and staircases. They made Raymond their idol at once, and, fascinated by his handsome face and winning manners, they did not in the slightest degree resent the consequential airs he every now and then chose to assume. They were amused by them, and were quite willing to be treated as either friends or slaves, as the young master might fancy. It was the same with all the tenants and other retainers of the estate, who had flocked to the Hall to be present at a dinner which the guardians had deemed it advisable to give a few days after his arrival. Raymond sat in the place of honour at the head of the long table, and when his health had been drunk he sprang up, and standing on the chair, said, before Mr. Ellerton, who had intended to return thanks for him, had had time to rise to his feet,—

"Thank you all awfully for drinking my health. I am very glad Uncle Fred let me sit up to dine with you to-night, and I hope I shall have you all here again some day soon. I like Winsdale awfully, and think it is the jolliest, best place in the world; and I like all you fellows—what I have seen of you—and hope you will all like me. I haven't a notion how to make a proper speech, so now I'll shut up."

As the men sitting round that table looked up at the little figure attired in a suit of black velvet, with his bright looks and winning smile, speaking to them

thus in simple, boyish language, there was not one amongst them whose heart did not go out to the lad, and cheer after cheer rang through the arched roof of the hall as Raymond popped down into his seat again.

As to Mr. Ellerton, he was so utterly astounded at his nephew's performance that he remained rooted to his chair, nervously working his fingers, and staring at the boy as if he had never seen him before; and it was not until there had been repeated calls for him that he rose to his feet and managed to say a few words appropriate to the occasion. His nervousness and diffidence prevented him from being a good speaker, yet what he said was nicely put, well meant, and well received.

Although Raymond certainly almost monopolized every one's attention, it must not be supposed that Dorothy was neglected. She was such a sweet, lovable little creature, with her serious, quaint-like ways, and so devoted to her brother, that it would hardly have been possible for his admirers to do otherwise than make a pet of her.

When Raymond came in from the stables, he stopped in the hall, kicked off his boots, which were covered with mud, and shouted out for some one to bring him his shoes. He called in vain for a few minutes: no one appeared. Highly indignant, he ran along to the housekeeper's room, and throwing open the door with a bang, inquired at once,—

"What's up, Mrs. Bassett? I've just come in from the stables, and my boots were so dirty I had to change; and here have I been bellowing for some one to bring me my shoes for I don't know *how* long, and not a soul took any notice. I wish you would go and blow them all up, for I don't intend putting up with that sort of thing. Oh! and just send some one to bring me my shoes here—quick, please. I expect uncle will be sick of waiting for me, and I can't go to him with nothing on."

"But, Master Travers, if the big door in the hall was closed, you might call for an hour and no one would hear you. I will send some one with your shoes now though. But take care, sir; don't upset my workbox whilst I am gone, please—there's a good boy;" for Raymond's mischievous fingers were turning the contents over, and in the most hap-hazard fashion.

"All right. I won't do any harm if you will hurry up."

Scarcely had Mrs. Bassett left the room before Mrs. Ellerton entered.

"O Ray, is that you? Your uncle has been waiting for you half an hour or more. You ought not to be so inconsiderate, dear child. But what are you doing here? I sent out to the stables after you."

"I came in here to get Mrs. Bassett to go and send some one with my shoes. I couldn't get any one to hear me yelling for them when I was in the hall."

"But couldn't you have gone to get them yourself, you lazy fellow? Why, it was further coming here than if you had gone round to the boot-room yourself. Oh, whilst I think of it, Ray, what in the world is the meaning of all the chintz covers being taken off the furniture in the drawing-room? They are almost new, so I could not make it out; and when I asked the housemaid, she said that *you* had ordered her to take them off."

"Why, yes, Auntie Rosie; of course I did. These covers are such poor, tame-looking things, and that yellow satin stuff looks so swell, I thought it was a regular shame to hide it. Besides, I want everything in *my* house to look extra smart just now, in case that guardian chap should turn up."

"But, you ridiculous boy, do you think Mr. Forbes will think more of you or like you better because the furniture covers are off? No, no, Master Ray, I am not going to have all that beautiful brocade faded and soiled; so on they will go again. Keep your drawing-room nice until you are a man and have got a wife to use it. Now here's Jane with your shoes, and I hear uncle calling, so do make haste like a dear boy."

Raymond did not at all approve of any of his orders being countermanded, so he was not at all well pleased when Mr. Ellerton, after having first made him give up the key of the post-bag, which he had appropriated without permission, said to him before commencing work,—

"Raymond, you really must try to remember what I have so often had occasion to tell you—that until you are twenty-one you have no right to do exactly as you may think fit. I happened to go into your bedroom to-day, and was excessively amazed to find all those old family portraits that have hung there for generations taken down, and a lot of pictures of dogs, and horses, and jockeys, and such like things, put up in their place."

"Oh yes, uncle; I had those put up one day last week. I really couldn't stand staring at all those ugly old frumps when I awoke in the morning."

"So Mrs. Bassett told me, Ray, when I questioned her about it; and moreover I discovered that all these fresh pictures had been brought up from the servants' hall."

"Yes, uncle; they were a stunning deal too good to stay there, so I told them to put the ones from my room up there instead. They would do well enough there; or if the servants didn't like them, I said they could poke them up in the lumber-room—anywhere out of my sight."

"I *am* surprised at you, Raymond. I should have thought you would have taken more pride in your ancestors. Why, my boy, there are hundreds—yes, thousands—of people in the world who would give anything to possess these portraits that you despise. Any one can buy those bright daubs that you admire, but the others cannot be purchased."

"But, uncle, they are so hideous, and look so stiff and prim. When I awoke in the morning I used to think they were all staring at me and making faces. Horrid old wretches! I often used to feel inclined to jump out of bed and fling my boots at them."

Mr. Ellerton could not refrain from laughing as he replied: "I did not know you were such a baby, Raymond. If Dolly were to talk like that, I should not be surprised; but I am astonished at you—a big boy like you! Anyhow, I have ordered all the portraits to be put back again in their old places, and the other pictures to be rehung in the servants' hall; but I will promise you this much, that if you are a good boy, and try to be punctual at your lessons, and not keep me waiting as you have done to-day, and so many times lately, I will send up to London and get you down a few nice photographs of your favourite horses and dogs. But come, let us get to work now; it is shockingly late this morning."

The tears that welled up into Raymond's eyes when his uncle called him babyish did not overflow, though he had to make a great effort to prevent them; and his damped spirits had hardly risen to their accustomed pitch until work was over.

Two or three days later on, Raymond, attired in a long greatcoat trimmed round the collar and cuffs with dark fur, both hands thrust as usual into the pockets, and a dark red fez over his clustering curly locks, was taking a solitary stroll through the grounds.

He was in a private path in a most secluded part of the park, and strutting briskly along, engaged in his own thoughts, he did not perceive that any one was approaching him. At length the sound of footsteps on the hard frosty ground struck his ear, and looking up he beheld a tall dark man within a few yards of him. He saw at the first glance that the intruder was a gentleman. "Who in the world can the fellow be?" thought the boy; and as he regarded the stately bearing and general carriage of the stranger, he felt for a moment overcome by a spirit of shyness. But the feeling passed away almost as quickly as it had come. "He shan't trespass through the grounds at his will in this way, as if there were no master at Winsdale Hall, I can tell him," was the next idea that ran through his mind; and then walking straight up to the stranger, who had not perceived the lad until he was quite close, he said in his grandest manner,—

"Are you aware, sir, that this is a private path?"

"Yes, I know it," quietly replied the trespasser, whilst his heavy black moustache concealed a smile as he looked down at the boy; "but what of it, if it is private, as you call it? Paths are made to be walked upon, I suppose?"

"Public paths are," replied Raymond indignantly; "but private ones are not intended for strangers. Trespassers are prosecuted who come here: you can

see it written up on that notice-board, if you take the trouble to read it."

"Well, young man, well; but who is going to prosecute me, I should like to know?"

"The squire of Winsdale," replied Raymond in angry tones.

"In—deed!" said the stranger in a half-choked voice. "And *who* is this squire of Winsdale? Is he such an ogre that you think his name will frighten me? If you will kindly take me to him, why, I might ask him to pardon me this once."

"Then you will have to ask me!" said Raymond, drawing himself very upright, and speaking with an air of great consequence. "*I* am Raymond Marmaduke Travers, squire of Winsdale!"

Poor boy! he felt much hurt at the way in which the impertinent stranger received the announcement with which he had hoped to overwhelm him. Instead of producing awe and respect, it merely called forth a long, deep laugh, that sounded far and wide through the woods on either side.

At last the stranger checked his mirth, and looking at Raymond with merriment still lingering in his large dark eyes, he said gravely,—

"Forgive me, squire. I beg your pardon most humbly, both for trespassing in your private path and also for laughing in this way. I have not laughed like this for years—for many years, I should think. I don't often allow my feelings to get beyond my

control, but they did just now, I confess. To tell you the truth, squire, I am on my way up to the Hall to see Mr. Ellerton. Will you not walk back there with me, just to show there is no ill-feeling between us?"

Without speaking, Raymond turned round and walked by the side of the stern-looking stranger. Yes, he was stern-looking; no one could deny it. His hair was black as a gipsy's, his features regular, his eyes dark and piercing, and his mouth—the softest feature in his face—was concealed by a heavy, drooping moustache. Raymond recovered his equanimity in a few minutes, and was soon regaling his companion with a history of himself and of all he intended doing at Winsdale. He even went so far as to tell him of his latest ambition, which was to have a lake made which should be well stocked with fish for him to catch.

The stranger did not say much; he merely answered in monosyllables, until at last he inquired in a careless tone, "Mr. Ellerton is your guardian, isn't he?"

"Yes; and a dear, kind old fellow he is too. I'm awfully fond of Uncle Fred, though he does jaw me a bit every now and then, you know. I know he hates it, which is a blessing. Of course, if I get into a row, it's my own lookout.—Do you know Aunt Rosalie? She's awfully kind too, and she never jaws me. You see she is *so* fat, she couldn't, I believe—it would be too much fag for her. I think she must weigh about fourteen stone; but I'm not certain. Uncle is as lean

as he can be; but of course if you know him you know that."

"Yes," replied the stranger; "he certainly couldn't be called stout. Have you any brothers or sisters?"

"Oh yes; I have got my sister Dorothy, only we generally call her Dolly. She is four and a half now, and such a darling. She is so good; and no one is ever cross to her. I would punch their heads for them if they were. Oh, and I have got another guardian. He is coming some time this week, I believe—at least he wrote to uncle to say so. Don't you think a fellow must be an awful idiot who can't make up his mind when he is coming to a place—what day, you know, and what train? This man can't. I think he must be very weak-minded; don't you?"

"Humph!" was all the reply; but that was sufficient for Raymond, who dearly loved to hear the sound of his own voice, and at once went on—

"I'm not at all sure I shall like the chap when he does take it into his stupid head to come. You see I don't know him, and he doesn't know me; and from what Uncle Fred said to Aunt Rosie about him the other morning at breakfast, I think he must be a queer sort of a fellow—a kind of *policeman* sort of a man."

"Policeman sort of a man!" repeated the stranger.

"Well, yes, that's just about what it came to. You just listen now, and see if you don't think so too.

Uncle said people who knew him well were devoted to him, and said all sorts of good about him. Well, I know Ellen—she was the housemaid at Dove Cot, and we used to go out with her sometimes if nurse was busy—had a great friend who was a policeman, and after she had been talking to him she used to tell Dolly and me he was the nicest, handsomest man in Kenworth. Then uncle said Cousin Vivian seldom stopped long in one place, and was always on the go. Now, isn't *that* like a policeman? And then—let me see, yes—he said he was a difficult chap for strangers to get on with, he shut himself up so. Now, you know that's *exactly* like a policeman does. Why, I remember one day in Kenworth seeing some boys trying to be a bit friendly to that friend of Ellen's—they called him 'Bobby dear' (which I suppose was a pet name), and sang little verses to him—why, one boy offered him two apples even; and, would you believe it? he just stalked along as solemn as a judge, and never said a word. Oh no; I have made up my mind I won't be towered over by this guardian, and I mean to tell him so when he comes."

"But what should make you think he will want to 'tower' over you, as you call it?"

"I don't know exactly, but I have a notion he will, and I hate being bothered; don't you?"

"Yes," replied the stranger; "most people do, and no one more than myself."

"Here we are," cried Raymond; "and there is uncle

looking out of the library window. Bother it! I am late as usual. I do my lessons with uncle, and he has promised to get me some photos of horses and dogs for my room if I will only come in punctually to work—one a week. I begin a fresh week every day, but I don't believe I shall ever get them."

They had entered the house, and were crossing the hall on their way to the library, when suddenly Raymond stood still, and looking up at his companion with a bright colour glowing on his beautiful face and an eager look in his brown eyes, he said,—

"I like you, and hope you are coming to stay here with uncle. I should like to show you all over my place. Cousin Vivian's room is all ready, and you can easily have that. It's the red room, and such a jolly one. He can fish for another. I don't even know your name, but do, please, say you will stay."

The heavy moustache trembled again, as it had already done many times during their walk, and the stranger, taking the boy's outstretched hand in his, gazed a moment into his upturned, happy countenance, and then replied,—

"Thank you. I accept your invitation, Raymond, and hope we shall soon know each other much better. My name is Vivian Forbes!"

IV.

FIRM FRIENDS.

DAY after day slipped by, and more than a fortnight had elapsed since Raymond had so pressingly invited his guardian to become his guest. It must not be imagined that during that time the boy had kept out of mischief, overawed by the presence in the house of two guardians instead of one. No; on the contrary, he had tried his uncle's patience more than usual, had given himself more airs than usual, got into more scrapes than usual, and had been utterly astonished when the new guardian had spoken to him rather severely and sternly on more than one occasion —a mode of address to which he was totally unaccustomed. However, by taking the rough and the smooth together, the two cousins had got on well, and were fast friends. Cousin Vivian was so different to Uncle Fred that Raymond found he could not treat the one exactly as he treated the other, and he felt bound by some power that he could not exactly define to treat his cousin's orders with more respect than he did those of his uncle. He loved his uncle with all his

boyish heart; he learned to love his cousin also, but he learned at the same time to dread raising the dark cloud that would appear on his face if he were wilfully naughty and disobedient. No such cloud ever came across uncle's face; he would look sad and sorrowful, and though he was firm with the boy when necessary, he felt far more grief when obliged to punish him than the recipient of the punishment did himself.

"Uncle is much the kindest, and lets me have my own way a lot more than Cousin Vivian," the boy would think to himself; "but Cousin Vivian is *splendid* when I keep straight, and don't make a young ass of myself, as he calls it."

Yes; strange as it may appear, Vivian Forbes won the hearts of both his little wards. His smiles were rare, he seldom laughed, he did not care for children, and yet Raymond loved him; and wee Dorothy would sit for an hour at a time on a footstool at his feet looking up into his dark, stern countenance with a most earnest expression in her blue eyes.

"What are you thinking of, little woman?" he asked her one morning, as raising his eyes from his book he met her gaze. "You have been sitting still for so long I am sure you must be quite tired. Would you like to come with me for a turn on the terrace? I am going to have a smoke there."

"I would like to come with you vewy much, Cousin Wivian. S'all I wun and ask nurse to put on my coat?"

"Yes, run away. I will wait for you by the front door."

In a few minutes the tall man and his tiny companion were walking up and down.

Poor Dolly found it hard work to keep up with the long strides of her cousin—two of hers would not match one of his. At last she could stand it no longer, so breaking the silence in which they had been marching to and fro, she said bravely,—

"I want your hand, Cousin Wivian."

Then they walked hand in hand. Matters, however, did not improve for Dolly, so at last she said,—

"When you take a walk with a lady like me, do you know it is vewy wude to take such gweat long steps. My legs aren't 'normously long ones like yours."

"Forgive me, Dolly," answered Mr. Forbes with a smile. "I ought to have remembered that your powers of walking are limited. Talk to me a bit. I can answer although I am smoking."

"If I ask you a question, will you tell me it?"

"Yes, go on. What is it?"

"Why didn't you bwing your s'ell with you?"

"My what?"

"Your s'ell, that uncle said you shut yourself up in. I want to see it *so* much."

"Do you mean 'shell,' child?"

"Yes, that's it—your s'ell. Uncle said to Auntie Wosie long time ago, before you came, that you shut

yourself up in it, and no one could be able to see what you were weally like. Why isn't your s'ell like the snail's s'ell? He always cawwies his on his back. Is yours up in your twunk?"

Vivian fairly laughed, for at last he began to comprehend what the child was driving at, and the remembrance of his "policeman"-like character came back to him.

"Oh, I understand you now. What a funny little mortal you are! I haven't got any shell really. Uncle only meant that I am an unsociable fellow, and keep to myself; which is true enough, for somehow I cannot make friends with every Jack, Tom, and Harry I meet. That's all. Do you understand now?"

"Yes — I — thinks — I — do," said Dolly slowly. "But, Cousin Wivian, if I was you I would make heaps and quantities of fwiends, and then no one would say you had got a s'ell which you lived in. Some Jack and Tom and Hawwy chwistened men may be vewy nice, and be 'tremely nice, kind fwiends."

Phieff! phieff! went the cigar, and a grunt was the only answer.

"Can big gwown-up men be fwiends with vewy little girls not five yet?" presently asked the child in a thoughtful tone.

"Certainly, Dolly, that they can, and very fast ones too."

"Then," said the soft, pleading voice, "do you think you could have me for your fwiend? I *do* wish you

would, dear Cousin Wivian, 'cause then I can tell Uncle Fwed you haven't got a s'ell any more."

"All right, little one. Let us make a bargain that we two will be the best of friends for our lives. Shake hands on it."

"No, no; that won't do. I always kisses my fwiends. You must stoop down and let me kiss you."

Vivian Forbes felt strangely moved as, throwing away the end of his cigar, he bent down and, taking off his hat, received Dolly's embrace, and kissed the sweet face in return.

"I will always love you so much now, and will ask God to take care of you when I say my pwayers," murmured the child with her arms around his neck.

Vivian lit another cigar—an operation that greatly excited Dolly's interest—and the two newly-made friends continued to pace up and down the terrace. Every now and then they would talk, but upon the whole there was not a great deal of conversation between them—both seemed wrapped up in their own thoughts. Just as the first gong sounded for luncheon they entered the house.

"What long hair you have, Dolly!" said Vivian, taking up the shining golden tresses in his hands as he followed her upstairs. "Don't you find it a bother having it got out of tangles?"

"Nurse won't let it get in much tangles," replied Dolly, "she bwushes it such a lot. Would you like long hair like mine, Cousin Wivian?"

"No, certainly not," he answered, as he entered his room and closed the door.

It was a strange friendship that was thus formed between the strong man in the prime of life and the little child just as it were commencing hers—a friendship that increased in strength as time flew onwards, that influenced not only their own future but the future of those dear to them, and yet produced a result most unexpected and unwished for as its first-fruits.

That same afternoon, when Vivian Forbes strolled into the drawing-room for a cup of five-o'clock tea, he was much surprised to see Mrs. Ellerton in tears, and her lap covered with a mass of golden hair. Mr. Ellerton was standing by her side, entreating her in nervous tones to try to compose herself.

"What's the matter?" inquired Vivian, at once looking first at one and then at the other in amazement.

"Dorothy has cut off her—her hair," replied Mr. Ellerton, "and my dear wife insists upon taking it so much to heart. I tell her it will all grow again."

"Dolly cut off her hair!" repeated Vivian. "What do you mean? What can she have done it for?"

"I don't know; indeed I cannot imagine. It seems that when she came in from her walk this afternoon, after she had undressed, nurse told her to go to the nursery, where she was going to follow herself in a minute or two. Instead of going there, it seems that

she went into her aunt's room, and climbing on a chair before the glass, she took a pair of nail-scissors from a drawer and cut it off.—Hush, hush, my darling! don't distress yourself in this way, pray don't. Cheer up, Rosalie dear.—Well, Mrs. Bassett happened to be passing along the gallery at the time, and glancing into the room through the half-open door, saw her in the very act."

"But could she not have stopped her?" asked Vivian.

"No, it was too late; the mischief was done. And just as she hurried in, Dolly jumped off the chair, and running up to her with her hands full of hair, asked her to throw it into the ash-pit, as she didn't want the nasty stuff any more."

Mrs. Ellerton was here obliged to laugh even through her tears, and addressing Vivian, said,—

"Did you ever hear of such a thing, Mr. Forbes? The idea of throwing this beautiful hair into the ash-pit! Well, I suppose it is no good crying about it any more, but really it is enough to break any one's heart. Oh, dear me! I haven't got any cap on at all, I believe. I wish you would look about for it, Fred dear."

"Here it is, my love. You dropped it off, and I rescued it from serving as a pillow for Smut just now. I have tried to pull it out a bit, but I am afraid it doesn't look very nice."

"Oh, never mind, Fred; I daresay it will do well

enough, and if it's tumbled I daresay Mr. Forbes won't look at it. He knows what a state of upset I have been in;" and Mrs. Ellerton hastily pinned the cap on her head, hind part before. Her husband's neat eye was of course much offended by this proceeding, but out of consideration for her recent trouble, he exercised a large amount of self-denial by pretending not to observe it.

"What has Dolly to say for herself?" inquired Vivian presently. "Have you asked her?"

"No," replied Mr. Ellerton; "but I will ring for her to be sent down."

In a few minutes the door opened and Dolly appeared. She was a most comical-looking little object. Her hair lay in curly locks over her forehead as usual, but on one side of her head it was cut short like a boy's, and on the other about an inch or two longer, whilst at the back there was left one long golden tress reaching to her waist, that she had not been able to reach. There was a flush on her face, her hands were tightly clasped together, and she was looking very serious. Without heeding the exclamations with which her entrance was greeted, she walked straight up to Vivian, and looking up earnestly into his face, she said, "I've cut off all my hair 'cause you didn't like it, and have given it to Mrs. Bassett to frow into the ash-pit. Nurse is vewy angwy with me; but I told her you were my fwiend, and peoples must twy to please their fwiends."

"You cut it off because *I* didn't like it! Good gracious, little woman! what do you mean? Why, it was only this morning I was admiring your hair!"

"You don't wemember what you say, Cousin Wivian," replied Dolly in a hurt tone. "When I asked you if you would like long hair like mine, you said, 'No, certainly not.' *I* wemembers it quite well, and so I cut it off, 'cause—'cause you pwomised to be my fwiend," she added in a low voice, hanging her head and looking most piteous.

"You dear little innocent soul!" exclaimed Vivian, taking Dolly on his lap. "I do remember now; but I only meant though that I myself wouldn't like to have long hair—not that I didn't like yours." Then turning to Mrs. Ellerton, he said, "The fault is entirely mine, so you and every one must scold me for the loss of Dolly's golden locks. It was done, as she thought, to please me, through a misunderstanding, and she must not be blamed.—Dolly, ask auntie to give me a scissors from her work-basket, and I will steal this one long piece to keep in remembrance of what you sacrificed for my sake."

V.

A STOLEN DRIVE.

THE second week had grown into the fourth week, and yet Vivian Forbes still lingered on at Winsdale Hall. He had evidently at last found out the fact that all children are not the same, and that there was something specially attractive and interesting in the characters of his little wards, even though they were by no means model children in the ordinary acceptation of the word.

Thinking that the companionship of other boys would be good for Raymond, and would assist in teaching him his proper level, both his guardians encouraged the presence at the Hall of Hugh and Frank Fortescue, the sons of the rector of Winsdale—nice, carefully-brought-up lads, one a year older and the other about a year younger than himself. Hugh got on with the young squire the better of the two. He was the quieter, and generally fell into any plan that might be proposed by him without raising objections, whilst he invariably admired all his belongings, no matter what they were. The boy was not a humbug—

far from it; he was one of those whose actions are influenced mainly by those with whom they are thrown into contact. He never asserted his own independence, was naturally of a gentle, docile disposition, and if he got into scrapes, did so because he was weak-minded enough to allow himself to be led into them by others. He took a great liking to Raymond, and became consequently a mere tool in his hands. His brother Frank, on the contrary, was made in an entirely different mould. He was possessed of the highest spirits, would not brook interference from any other boy, and did not hesitate to express his thorough enjoyment in any undertaking, forbidden or otherwise, that required a certain amount of pluck or enterprise in its accomplishment. He liked Raymond well enough, but was not in the least impressed by his position, and used to chaff and tease him as if no such place as Winsdale Hall existed. One of Raymond's great ambitions was to be allowed to drive out by himself in a high dog-cart that had belonged to his late cousin, and been used by him when home on leave. He had repeatedly asked his guardians to allow him to use this carriage, but very naturally they had refused permission unless he took one of the grooms with him—an arrangement which he did not at all see the force of. He longed intensely to fly over the frosty roads, perched on that high seat, and handling that deliciously long whip. The desire became so great that it filled his thoughts by day and haunted his dreams by night. Of course

he had told the young Fortescues all about it, and Hugh had condoled with him in a most comforting manner over the grievance, whilst Frank had only chaffed him for being under orders. At last one day, as the three lads were taking a stroll together, Raymond, exasperated by Frank's perpetual teasing about being a good little boy, tied to his guardians' apron-strings, etc., said, "Hang you, Frank! Can't you shut up? I tell you what it is—I have made up my mind I *will* drive Jerry in the dog-cart, and that too this very afternoon, whatever Uncle Fred and Cousin Vivian may say. I will take you fellows with me, too, if you like."

"Hurrah!" shouted Frank, tossing his hat up in the air and catching it again. "But how are you going to manage?"

"You just leave that to me, and you will see," replied the young squire. "We must take John to start with us, but then I intend to get rid of him after a bit."

"How will you do that?" inquired Hugh. "Suppose he won't go."

"Yes, but suppose he will though," said Raymond. "He's jolly good-natured, and you see if I don't send him off all right."

The three boys now went round to the stables, where Raymond, who had already obtained permission from Mr. Ellerton to take his friends for a drive, ordered Jerry to be harnessed into the dog-cart and

John to get ready to drive, as he wished to go to Bickerton, a place about five miles off. The boys then went into the house, and in the hall they met Mrs. Ellerton, who asked if they were going to walk into the village, as she had a letter she wanted to go off by the early post.

"No, auntie; we aren't going to walk there, but we shall pass through. We are going to drive in the dog-cart to Bickerton. I haven't been there yet, you know."

"Oh, then, dear boy, that will do just as well. Mind you don't forget to post it. Hark! I hear wheels; I expect that's the dog-cart coming round. You have chosen a beautiful afternoon for a drive, but you must take plenty of rugs to keep you warm. What a high dog-cart!" she exclaimed, as the boys flung open the front door. "I haven't seen it before. Do take care you don't fall out any of you. You would most certainly break your necks."

"I believe you would want a ladder to climb up here, auntie," shouted Raymond, as he seated himself next to John, and the Fortescues scrambled up behind.

"I could not get up a ladder if I tried, as you very well know, Master Impudence," laughed Mrs. Ellerton. "Good-bye. I shall feel quite nervous till you are safe home again."

Just as the dog-cart left the park they met Vivian Forbes, who looked rather astonished at meeting them. He stopped a minute and told the Fortescues to be

sure to hold on tight, as a sudden jerk might pitch them forward, and out they would go. "And John," he added, "mind you keep a firm hand on Jerry; he looks rather fresh."

"Yes, sir," replied the man, and then away they started again. It really was a most delightful sensation passing rapidly through the air in that exalted position, and it was so nice, too, being able to look over the tops of the walls and hedges—in fact, there was not a doubt but that this high dog-cart, skimming along the roads on its enormous wheels, was out and out the best conveyance the three boys had ever been in. "Yes, but how much, *much* jollier it will be when I manage to get the reins and make Jerry go myself," thought Raymond. "Driving is easy enough, and Jerry goes as quietly as a lamb."

Before long they had reached the village of Winsdale. Just as they were entering it, Frank leaned back and said to Raymond in a whisper, "I say, are you going to pitch John into the pond we are coming to, or what are you going to do?"

"Never you fear," he replied; "I'm going to send him off right enough.—We must go past the post-office, John," he said aloud, turning to the man. "I've a letter of Aunt Rosie's to post, and I want six penny stamps."

In a few minutes the dog-cart drew up in front of the post-office, and John was cogitating in his own mind as to whether he ought to get down and leave

Jerry, or whether Raymond would post the letter and get the stamps himself. Whilst he was still doubtful, his young master settled the matter for him by handing him the letter and the sixpence, and saying in an authoritative tone, "Give me the reins, John; I'll hold them till you come back."

Jerry was standing as quietly as possible, so John, thinking that after all no possible harm could arise in the few minutes he would be in the post-office, placed the reins in Raymond's hands, sprang down, and went in. Now here was the opportunity for Raymond, and he did not fail to make use of it. John, standing at the counter with his back to the door, did not see the boy scramble into his vacant place and arm himself with the whip, and another carriage happening to be passing in an opposite direction just at that moment prevented his hearing the wheels of the dog-cart as it rolled away. There was a slight delay over getting the stamps, owing to another person who had entered just before him being served first—still he was not more than three or four minutes in the post-office at the outside; but when he came out the dog-cart and its occupants had flown. They were nowhere to be seen. Up the road and down the road he looked in vain; there was not a sign of them. He drew his hand across his eyes as if to wipe away some mist that obscured them, and looked again. Alas! he had seen aright: the dog-cart was nowhere to be seen; and moreover, as ill-luck

would have it, there was not a human being in sight, not even a child. The post-office was situated at the extreme end of the village, a little distance above a corner where three roads met. What was to be done? Unfortunate John! Like a dazed creature he hurried back into the shop and frantically demanded of the postmaster, a cross-grained old man, if he had noticed in which direction the dog-cart had gone.

"Dog-cart!" he repeated; "what does I know about dog-carts? Let those look after 'em that 'as 'em."

"Then you didn't see it! The young squire and the two Master Fortescues are in it alone; so for mercy's sake speak out!"

"The young squire and the Master Fortescues! Gracious me! No, man; I knows nothin' o' the concern. I see'd it standin' there; but after I 'ad gived it a glance, I never troubled my 'ead no more about it than that cat there!"

John bolted out of the shop again, at his wits' end to know what it was best to do. It would be no good to hurry down one road, when perhaps they had gone by another. It would be waste of time to go back to the Hall if help could be got nearer. These thoughts followed in rapid succession as he walked a few hurried steps. Suddenly he was startled by a sharp voice saying, "Bless my heart! can't you look out where you're a-walking of? You nearly 'ad me over!" and looking up he perceived that he had

jostled up against an old woman carrying a bundle of firewood, who had just turned the corner.

"I begs pardon, mother!" he answered; "but when a man's in the fix I'm in he doesn't think to look where he's walking."

"Why, what's up? Anything wrong up at the 'All? I knows you belongs up there."

"Yes, I do; and it's my dog-cart bolted whilst I was in at the post-office, with only the young squire and the two Master Fortescues in it, that I'm in trouble about. I don't know which way they've gone."

"Well, to be sure, 'tis a pretty kettle of fish. But you must be after 'em, man; 'tain't no good your potterin' 'ere—that won't bring 'em back with no bones a-broken of, I can tell ee."

Just at this moment a little dirty urchin, who had come up and stood by the old woman's side whilst John was speaking, said eagerly,—

"I knows, granny. I see'd the trap a-goin' down the Bickerton road whilst I war in a-talkin' to Jim Robinson; and the young squire war drivin' too, and a-flourishin' about his whip grand like."

"Thank you, my lad, thank you!" cried John; and without waiting for another word he set off, running with all his might. He did not go straight along the Bickerton road, but selected a short cut across the fields in order to reach a part of it where there was rather a sharp turning, which the dog-cart must soon

reach, if indeed it had not already passed. He was a swift runner, and ere long arrived at the spot. He looked for the carriage in vain—it was nowhere to be seen; and the road was so hard from the frost that no wheel-marks were visible on it.

However, he felt that anything was better than standing still, so on he ran again as fast as his legs would carry him. He was almost exhausted. Big drops of perspiration were dropping off his face, and, strong man though he was, he could not have gone much further, when he met a gentleman on horseback with his arm in a sling, who immediately stopped and inquired what was the matter. John explained in a panting voice, and then at once the gentleman dismounted, saying,—

"This is dreadful! Heaven grant those unfortunate children don't break their necks! I'm no good, for I broke my arm about three weeks ago; but I can easily walk home. You take my horse; he will go at a good rate, and you seem pretty well pumped out. I shall come or send up to the Hall to-morrow for him."

"Thank you, sir—a thousand times thank you!" cried weary John as he mounted, and in a few minutes the horse and its rider were lost to sight.

We will now go back to see how it had fared meantime with the young occupants of the dog-cart. Very proud did Raymond feel as he took his place on

the coachman's seat; and gently touching Jerry's back with the whip, as he had watched John do, for the first time in his short life the little fellow handled the reins on his own account. In his fur-trimmed coat and a soft fur cap crowning the curly locks, his cheeks flushed with excitement, and his bright eyes looking brighter than usual, the lad made a pretty picture on his high perch. It was decidedly pleasant, he thought, that he was driving his own horse and his own dog-cart. His two companions possessed neither the one nor the other. It did not matter to him that his legs were not long enough to allow of his feet resting comfortably on the board as John's did, nor that it was extremely difficult to hold the reins in the correct style between his fingers in one hand, in order that he might flourish his whip with the other. Jerry trotted on quietly enough; and at last Frank insisted upon climbing over to the vacant place by Raymond's side.

"No; you go back, Frank. Hugh can come if he likes; but I won't have you here. You are sure to make a noise and be up to tricks."

"No, I shan't! I'll be as good as gold and as quiet as a mouse; so don't be afraid, old fellow."

"Afraid! What do you mean, Frank? It's not likely I am going to put up with any cheek from you, you know. Just get to the back again, and keep in your proper place."

"Just keep your horse in the proper place, coach-

man. You are pulling the right rein so hard you will have us in the ditch directly."

"I'm doing nothing of the sort, you meddling young idiot!" said Raymond, greatly irritated. "I don't require *you* to teach me, thank you!—Here, Hugh, for pity's sake get over and sit between us, for I won't have Frank next to me. There's plenty of room for us all three!"

Hugh climbed over; the three boys sat together, and peace seemed restored. Jerry went quietly on, and Raymond was just saying how absurd it was of his guardians to have made such a fuss about his driving—it really was such an easy matter, and he could do it so well—when they reached the turning in the road.

Now though he knew which was the way to Bickerton, Raymond, engaged in talking to his friends—it might almost be said in boasting to them—had entirely forgotten the existence of that sharp turning. He drove Jerry straight on, and when the horse nearly had its nose into the fence in front of him, he was horror-struck. Now here was a real, *bona fide* difficulty. Hugh felt frightened; but Frank, not realizing the danger, burst out into a merry peal of laughter.

Raymond's presence of mind did not forsake him; so handing the whip to Hugh—his arm was not long enough to put it in its place—he seized the reins, one in each hand, and pulled the horse back with all his little strength. He was just in time. Jerry backed,

and seeing what was required of him, turned the corner safely; but the dog-cart gave such a swing in doing so that all three boys thought it would have been over.

"Ah," sighed Raymond as Jerry trotted on again, 'that's an escape! I really thought we were done for! Give me back the whip, please."

"Yes," said Hugh, as he restored it to the owner; "it was an awful shave. You managed to bring Jerry round just in time. It was a mercy, Travers. I know I wouldn't care to get a tumble out—one is such a way up from the ground here."

"Oh, a dog-cart isn't worth anything unless it's a high one," replied Raymond. "When I'm a man I intend to have a higher one than this is, even; and then I shall always drive tandem."

"I say, Travers, what *will* you do if you forget to turn a corner then? Why, the leader would turn round and grin at you! I declare I'd give my Saturday penny to see it, upon my word I would," said Frank, forgetting that when Raymond was grown up he would be well-nigh the same age.

"Be quiet, Frank! you shouldn't be so tormenting," said his brother, seeing the colour deepen in Raymond's cheeks. "It's very good of Travers to take us with him, so you know it's too bad of you to be so provoking."

"Oh dear! oh dear!" was all the answer. "I would I were a squire, so that no one should tease

me!—Travers, I wish you would chop places with me for a bit: you go to the rectory, and I'll go up and be master at the Hall. I wonder how it feels to be a squire! I would so like to know."

"Frank, you are incorrigible!" said Hugh. "Do shut up. We have had enough of this sort of nonsense; and it's awfully rude to Travers, as I told you before."

"I don't care," growled out Raymond in a would-be contemptuous tone. "Let the baby talk if it amuses him."

Now to call him "baby" was the greatest insult that any one could offer Frank; for he was in truth the youngest of the family, and had, until he was nearly five years old, been known by that name only—a fact of which he was now very much ashamed. Hugh had once accidentally let out that such was the case; and Raymond, wishing now to give him a good set-down, and teach him that the squire of Winsdale was not accustomed to stand impertinence of the kind he had been indulging in, had addressed him thus on purpose to annoy him. The blood flew to Frank's face and the fire flashed into his eyes; but with a tremendous effort the boy managed to control his hot temper sufficiently to answer fairly quietly,—

"You had better not call me that again."

"And why not, I should like to know? Who's to prevent me?" asked Raymond.

"I will myself; so I advise you not to try it!"

"Ha, ha!" laughed Raymond, leaning in front of Hugh and looking at Frank in the most aggravating manner; "we will soon see about that. Baby! ba–by!"

Frank, unable any longer to restrain himself, cried out passionately,—

"I will soon stop you, though you *do* think yourself such a mighty swell! Take that!" and scarce knowing what he did, he aimed a blow with his fist straight at Raymond's face, across his brother. Luckily Hugh caught his arm just in time.

It was now Raymond's turn to fly into a rage. The impertinence of the fellow attempting to strike him! it was not to be endured for a moment. And then he, alas, alas! forgot his duty both as host and coachman; for he instantly sprang down upon his feet to return the blow which he had *not even received*, and in so doing let fall the reins from his hands in his mad fury, regardless of all consequences. Hugh had now to prevent Raymond from reaching his brother, and himself received the blow intended for him.

"Travers, do be quiet!" he cried. "See, you have dropped the reins!—Frank, this all comes of your teasing!—Keep back, Travers; I am not going to have you fighting here. Hit away at me if you like; but you shan't touch Frank. I say, Travers, do be sensible."

But instead of calming himself, Raymond became

ten times more enraged at Hugh's interference, and stormed away at him to let him pass. But Hugh, with a fast-beating heart, held his post; and it was just at the moment when Jerry, frightened by the noise they were making, and feeling too that no one held the reins and he was his own master, started off at a gallop, that Raymond dealt Hugh such a blow in the face that with a cry of pain the boy sank on the board and buried his face in the cushion, weeping bitterly. The path to Frank now lay open; but Jerry was tearing along at such a mad pace that both boys, forgetful of everything save their present danger, had to occupy themselves holding on with all their might, to escape being thrown out. On raced Jerry, regardless of his master's cries to him to stop. Bump, bump went the carriage over a stone, and then swinging it would go to the right, and then swinging it would go to the left. They were approaching a few cottages. A woman with a baby in her arms, standing at the door of one of them, saw the runaway vehicle coming along, and hastened inside to call her husband. He ran out into the road, hoping by holloing and shouting to stop the horse. And he did stop him; but Jerry drew up in such a manner that the dog-cart was overturned and its three occupants were precipitated out, and the next moment found themselves in different parts of a very dirty pond by the roadside. The water was not deep enough to drown them; but they each had a thorough

ducking, and found the bitterly cold slimy bath anything but a pleasant sensation. Neither of them was hurt, and they were slowly dragging themselves out as best they could, when the patter of horses' feet was heard, and looking up out of the one eye he could open, Raymond recognized in their riders Vivian Forbes and John.

VI.

THE CONSEQUENCES.

"ARE you hurt, boys?" inquired Mr. Forbes, as, having arrived on *terra firma*, they stood like three half-drowned rats before him, covered with mud and slime from head to toe, so that it was a somewhat difficult task to distinguish their faces, whilst the dirty water dripped from their clothes and formed small pools round their feet.

"N–o!" they all replied, coughing vigorously and trying to spit out the dirt that had come into their mouths. "No! bah! we are not hurt, but—"

"Never mind any 'buts,'" replied Vivian, in a stern voice; "you may thank God that you are not all killed!"

"If you please, sir," said John, coming up at that moment, "Jerry is all right, except that he's in no end of a 'eat; but one of the shafts be broken."

"Well, I wonder there is not a lot more damage done. You had better tie the shaft up and lead Jerry quietly home. Here, give that man sixpence for holding your horse, and bring it to me. I will take the

bridle, as I am going to go back slowly.—As to you boys, the best thing you can do is to walk home as fast as you can. It will keep up your circulation and prevent you from catching cold. Oh, here, this good woman has brought a cloth, so wipe the mud off your faces. That's right. Now then, start off, all of you, in front of me, for I don't intend to let you out of my sight again."

The Fortescues, thoroughly overawed by Vivian's stern voice and the dark look on his face, obeyed immediately. His ward, however, though he was in reality trembling with fright, refused to stir. *He* could not walk through Winsdale in his present plight; people would look at him. No, he could not possibly do so; a carriage must be sent for him.

"Raymond, not another word! Go on, and walk with your friends."

"No I won't, Cousin Vivian; and it is very cruel of you to want me to," he answered, bursting into tears.

"No, it is not; and I am determined you shall obey me for your own sake, as the walk will keep you warm—so go on at once."

Still the boy did not stir; the tears streamed down his muddy cheeks, and he looked a most pitiful object.

"Raymond, I will not be disobeyed in this manner. It is not right, and I will not allow it. If you do not go on this moment, I shall dismount and make you."

Vivian spoke in his sternest tones; and the little fellow, glancing up for a second into his face, saw there such a look of calm determination that his common sense told him it would be useless to hold out any longer: so stamping with his wet boots upon the ground, and sobbing out, "I hate you, Cousin Vivian; you are a cruel, horrible man," he ran on as best he could, and joined his two friends. It was a sorry-looking procession that wound its way through Winsdale village about quarter of an hour later on. The three boys, in their dripping, mud-stained garments, walked first, all looking utterly ashamed of themselves, especially the young squire, who was in the middle; then followed Vivian, riding one horse and leading another; and last of all came John, with Jerry in the damaged dog-cart. It was but natural that the villagers should come out to stare; and many were the questions they managed to ask of John. It was nearly twilight when they reached the Hall. Vivian made the boys come in through the back entrance, hoping not to frighten Mrs. Ellerton by their distressed appearance; but his precaution was in vain, as both she and her husband were already in the hall, having heard the news of their arrival.

Mrs. Ellerton had been in a state of nervousness the last hour or more on account of the non-return of the dog-cart; and sitting over the fire in the drawing-room, she had pictured to herself all sorts of

dreadful things that might have happened. Now she hurried breathlessly forward with the full intention of embracing her beloved nephew in the overflow of her joy at his safe return; but Vivian caught her by the arm, saying,—

"Stop, Mrs. Ellerton, pray; the boys are all soaking wet. They have had a spill out of the dog-cart into a duck-pond; but they don't seem hurt, and I made them walk home to prevent their catching cold."

"O you poor darlings!" cried Mrs. Ellerton. "How did it happen? Why didn't that stupid John take better care of you? My heart misgave me when I saw you start off."

"It is a great mercy you are not all killed," added Mr. Ellerton. "It's no joke being thrown out of that dog-cart."

"I have not yet inquired how it did happen," replied Vivian, as the boys stood silent; "but I believe, as far as I yet understand, that John was not much to blame. Don't you think Hugh and Frank had better spend the night here, Mrs. Ellerton? We can hardly send them home as they are now."

"Yes, certainly. I'll send a line to Mrs. Fortescue to let her know they are safe; and a room shall be put ready at once.—Come upstairs, my dears; the back way will be best, you are in such a state. I am sure you will all be glad to have a nice hot bath, and something hot to take, and go to bed. Was the water very cold? Tell me all about it."

The wretched-looking little figures followed Mrs. Ellerton up the staircase, but neither spoke a word; and do all they could, neither she nor nurse could succeed in drawing forth more than monosyllables in answer to their questions. Even after they had been well washed, tucked up in warm blankets, and partaken of some hot port wine negus, and their favourite cake brought to them in bed by Mrs. Bassett, their spirits did not seem to rise. At last Mrs. Ellerton, thinking that perhaps this was owing to the fright they had received, left them to nurse's care to try to get to sleep. When she returned to the drawing-room, Vivian at once inquired if the boys had told her any particulars.

"No," she said. "Poor little fellows! I could scarcely get them to speak a word. They seemed half-dazed, and only too thankful to get into bed. It is simply a marvel how they escaped without breaking any bones; and they don't appear to be hurt anywhere. Now tell us all you know about it, and how you happened to be with them. There is quite time before the dressing-bell rings."

Mr. Forbes then told how he had met the dog-cart just after it had started; how he then went to call on some friends, whom he found out; and how, when he was about a mile from Bickerton, he had met John on a strange horse galloping as if for his life. "Of course I was much alarmed, for I knew he had gone with the boys. I stopped him, and he

told me he had not seen the dog-cart since he stopped at the post-office in Winsdale. It seems he got down there, leaving Jerry standing as quietly as possible, Raymond holding the reins—a very foolish thing of him to do, I said. He declared he was not more than three minutes in there; but when he came out the dog-cart had vanished. Some child told him that he had seen it going down the Bickerton road, and that Raymond was driving. John then set off running, hoping to catch them up. He was nearly exhausted, when he met on horseback some gentleman with his arm in a sling, who made him tell him what was wrong, and then insisted on lending him his horse. Whilst I was talking to John, a man with a cart came along, and we found out from him that the dog-cart was not on ahead; so that after passing that sharp turn by the sign-post it must have taken the lower instead of the upper road, and gone by the long round back towards Winsdale. We turned and rode on as fast as we could, and before long espied the dog-cart in front of us tearing along at a terrible pace. We expected every minute to see it go over. Just as we were approaching those three cottages by the old turnpike, about a mile from here, we saw a man rush out and try to stop Jerry, who suddenly drew up in such a manner that the dog-cart was overturned, and we saw the three boys shot out before our eyes! We galloped up, and instead of finding them with broken bones lying by the

roadside, as we had expected, we beheld to our great joy three slimy, mud-covered figures slowly making their way out of a wretched, or rather, I should say, *blessed*, little duck-pond. You know the rest of the tale, and how we walked home. I had to be very firm with Raymond about that. Fancy! three times he positively refused to obey me, and declared he would not walk through Winsdale. He had to give in though. I had no idea the boy could be so obstinate."

"What was his objection?" asked Mrs. Ellerton. "He is not generally a disobedient child."

"Only he was ashamed for the villagers to see him in such a state. But I did not mind that. I thought it might be a lesson to him. Besides, if I had sent a carriage for him as he wished, he would be sure to have caught cold waiting about in his wet clothes. The Fortescues obeyed at once, and never raised the slightest objection."

"Oh dear!" sighed Mrs. Ellerton. "I am so very sorry the dear boy should have been so naughty. I cannot endure either of the children being in disgrace; it makes me feel miserable. Do you think Ray really did drive off the dog-cart on purpose, Mr. Forbes? I only wish I hadn't given them that letter to post."

"I am certainly very much afraid it was all an arranged plan, for John could have posted your letter without going into the post-office at all; but Raymond

gave him sixpence to get some stamps, and you see by that means John was detained longer."

"If that was indeed the case," said Mr. Ellerton, who had been fidgeting about very much in his chair, and was now nervously pulling his beard, "Raymond was really extremely naughty, for both you and I, Forbes, have several times refused him permission to drive that dog-cart himself. Will—will you inquire into it to-morrow? I will leave the matter entirely in your hands, and feel sure you will act rightly by the boy."

"There's the dressing-bell, and I must go," said his wife, rising from the sofa. "I think Fred is quite right, Mr. Forbes; and we will be so much obliged if you will see to Ray yourself to-morrow. You know he is such a dear boy, and perhaps we may spoil him a little; but I do hate to have him punished."

"It is kinder to the lad to correct his faults now than to leave them until he is older," replied Vivian, as he held open the door for the lady to pass through.

The following morning Vivian took all three boys into the library directly after prayers.

"Well," said he in a cheerful tone, "how do you feel? Any the worse for your cold bath yesterday?" and then when they replied that they were all right, and felt quite fresh and well after their long night's rest, he added, "Come now, who is going to tell me how it all happened? How was it?"

There was no answer. The Fortescues looked at

each other. Raymond put his hands into his pockets and studied the toes of his shoes.

"How was it, Raymond? I want to know," said Vivian, still in an encouraging voice. "I shall think you all lost your tongues in that duck-pond if you cannot speak."

Frank burst out laughing at such an idea. With a wistful expression Hugh looked up at Mr. Forbes, who for the first time noticed a black bruise close to his eye. Raymond was still engaged in the contemplation of his shoes, and uttered no sound.

"Well, Hugh, you are the eldest, and I am sure you will have sense enough to answer a simple question. How was it that the dog-cart started off after John left you? Do you know?"

"Yes, I know," replied the boy; "but I would rather not tell."

"Ah, I see," said Vivian. "You are afraid of telling tales; but you need not fear, you or Frank. I have asked Raymond, and as he will not answer himself, why, some one else must, that's all. Now tell me at once, like good, honest boys, the whole story. I am sure your father would wish you to do so."

Then by slow degrees Vivian succeeded in drawing forth the whole history of yesterday's performance, dating from the moment of their visit to the stables. The only thing they did not mention was the blow that Hugh had received in his face.

"It really was most my fault, sir," said sturdy

Frank, with a smile on his red lips. "Travers wouldn't have wanted to be a coachman half as badly if I hadn't chaffed him; and then Travers wouldn't have called me that horrid word and dropped the reins if I hadn't chaffed him again. Hugh told me to shut up; only I wouldn't, 'cause 'tis *such* fun teasing the squire. He gets in such an awful grind, you know, sir; and please, sir, I'm very sorry."

Vivian had some difficulty in controlling his countenance; however, he answered gravely,—

"I am glad you are sensible enough to know you did wrong, and are sorry for it, Frank. It does not do to be always teasing other people. You don't like to be teased yourself, and fly into a passion over it, as you did yesterday. It is a bad habit, my boy, and you will get into a lot of trouble when you go to school if you don't break yourself of it. Do to others as you would have others do to you. Don't forget that.—Hugh, what is that bruise by your eye? Did you knock yourself as you fell out yesterday, do you think?"

"I expect I did it," said Raymond in a low voice, breaking through his silence at last.

"Oh, 'tis nothing, sir," said Hugh, almost at the same moment.

Vivian looked from one boy to the other somewhat perplexed. "Was it when Hugh was trying to prevent you getting at his brother?"

"Yes, Cousin Vivian," said Ray, his better nature

winning the victory at last. "I hit him an awful whack, for I was nearly mad, I was so angry; but I am dreadfully sorry now, and—and— I say, Hugh, please forgive me, and let's be friends again."

The two boys shook hands, and Vivian, rejoiced at the turn affairs had taken, said,—

"Another time, Hugh, take my advice. Don't allow yourself to be led into taking part in other boys' wrong-doing. You should assert your independence more, my lad. Act as *you* know to be right, let others do or say what they may. That's the only way to get through life in an honourable, upright manner. As to yesterday, you can neither of you thank God too much that he was merciful enough to save you. It is a miracle, a perfect miracle, the manner in which you escaped. But come, let us go into the dining-room; breakfast must be ready, for I feel quite hungry." Then turning to Raymond he added, "Your breakfast will be sent in to you here. I cannot possibly allow you to join us. In about an hour I shall return, and hope then I shall find you more willing to own the wrong you did yesterday."

Frank and Hugh cast pitying glances at their friend as they followed Vivian out of the room; but they were completely lost upon the little fellow, who, utterly taken aback at his guardian's words, seated himself in a big arm-chair, and with folded arms and burning cheeks gazed straight into the fire. He did not move either when Morrison entered and placed a

tray with his breakfast on a little table near him. Poor boy! his pride had been severely wounded yesterday, and now here was he, not allowed to sit down to breakfast at his own table. The tray might stay there. He would not eat a mouthful of breakfast unless he could have it properly. This sort of treatment he simply would not put up with. *Who* was this Cousin Vivian, that he should take it upon himself to behave to him in this fashion? Uncle Fred never went on so. Uncle Fred was much the nicer of his two guardians; he was never unkind to him. He loved Uncle Fred, and Aunt Rosie, and Dolly—y–es, and, bother it, he did love Cousin Vivian until yesterday! He didn't now; no, he hated the fellow! Wouldn't he be glad when he was gone! They had been so happy until he came. No one bothered him, no one plagued him till then. He wished he wasn't getting so hungry. What was under that cover? There was no harm in looking, for he was *quite* determined he wouldn't eat anything shut up in here like this. That bit of sole did look uncommonly nice. His favourite fish too. It was a perfect shame of them having it for breakfast just when he wasn't going to eat any. But, oh dear! it wasn't at all comfortable to feel so hungry. He would just swallow a mouthful of coffee; it would be better than nothing. Yes, and he must have just that end off the roll, with just a scrap of butter; yes, and he would just have the least atom of the sole—it did look so good, and,

and—O bother, what a donkey he was! why, he had eaten it all, and all the roll too, and there wasn't even a teaspoonful of coffee left! Well, he couldn't help it now; it had all gone down his throat, and it was no good wishing to get it back again. It certainly was a horrid bore getting into scrapes. He wished now that that stupid dog-cart had been at the bottom of the Red Sea before he had ever seen it. How disgustingly dirty and cold that duck-pond was! If only he had not disobeyed orders, why he would never have got into it! And after all it hadn't been such a lark driving as he thought it would have been. His fingers felt quite stiff even now from holding the reins —yes, there was actually a piece of skin off one of them. He wondered what they were all doing in the other room. Hugh and Frank had never been to breakfast at the Hall before. How provoking it was he was not in there with them! He liked those fellows. Frank had a deal too much cheek about him, but could be awfully jolly when he chose. And then Hugh—he and Hugh always got on well together. He would give something not to have hit him like that yesterday. He must give him a really good present to make it up to him. What should it be? Yes, a paint-box like that Cousin Vivian had given him. Hugh had admired it so much. It was not half bad of Cousin Vivian to send up to London for that paint-box. He would give him all the money he had, and ask him if it would get a paint-box like that for

Hugh. Cousin Vivian was very kind when he liked, though he did look so dark and stern. He would—

Raymond's meditations were interrupted by the entrance of Dorothy.

"Hollo, Dolly Dot!" he exclaimed; "come and give me a beauty kiss. I haven't had one since yesterday afternoon."

Instead of kissing him, the little maiden turned away her head, and said, "No, Way. I s'all not kiss you, 'cause you're not good. Cousin Wivian told Uncle Fwed and Auntie Wosie he was so sowwy, but you were a naughty boy, and he wouldn't let you have bweakfast 'cept all by yourself. We were so vewy, *vewy* sowwy, and Auntie Wosie cwied so! But, Way, dear Way, you don't look naughty now. Are you?"

Half-laughing, Raymond answered, as he looked into his little sister's serious eyes, "No, Dolly Dot; I feel better now."

"But *better* is being good, Way! Why won't you be good? *Do* be good, dear Way. I'll say my pwayers to God to make you good, for oh, I do love you so!" And wee Dolly fell on her knees where she was, and with eyes raised to the heavens whispered her petition. The next minute Raymond was kneeling beside her, his arms around her, his face pressed to hers.

"Dolly darling, I will be good! I *am* good, and feel awfully sorry about yesterday. Kiss me, Dolly."

The little girl rose from her knees, flung her arms around her brother's neck, and kissed him again and again. At this moment the door opened and Vivian entered. It was a pretty picture that met his eye, those two children clasped in that fond embrace—Raymond on his knees on the hearthrug, his arms encircling Dolly's waist; Dolly's arms around his neck, his long brown curly locks flowing over his little black velvet coat with its lace collar, forming a beautiful contrast to her head of tiny golden curls and white Cashmere smocked frock. Vivian stood still, much struck by the sight; when Dolly, suddenly perceiving his presence, pulled herself away from her brother, and running up to him cried out in joyous accents,—

"Way's not naughty any more! All the wicked giants have jumpeded out of his heart! He is *quite* good now."

"I'm very glad to hear it, little woman. I always like people who are good. Have you one kiss left for me? That's right. Now I think nurse must be wondering where you are, so will you run upstairs and look for her? I want to talk to Raymond for a bit."

Without a word Dolly vanished, and then Vivian, turning to Raymond, said quietly, "This is good news, my boy. I hope Dolly is quite right."

"Yes, I hope so, Cousin Vivian," said the little fellow, looking up fearlessly into his guardian's face. "I really am *very* sorry I was so naughty yesterday, and I'll really try to be good."

"That is a good thing, Raymond, for you know you really were *very* naughty yesterday, and I was not at all pleased with your behaviour before breakfast. Why would you not answer when I spoke to you?"

"I 'spect it was Giant Bad-Temper had got hold of me, for I felt horrid bad."

"Well, 'tis a good job that you have got rid of him. And now about yesterday. Did you think that your disobedience might have cost not only your life but also that of your two friends? Or, supposing you had escaped and they had been injured, would you ever have forgiven yourself all your life long? Then, again, how could you so far forget yourself as to strike your friend Hugh? You heard what I said to Frank about teasing, or chaffing, as you boys call it. I say the same to you; but what I want specially to say to you is, that you should learn to control yourself under provocation. Don't let bad, naughty feelings win the victory. Conquer them. Don't let the giants, as Dolly calls them, conquer you. You overcome them. If you find it hard, ask God to help you. And now one more thing and then I have done. Have you ever thought of the influence you possess in your position here as squire of Winsdale? Do you know even a little boy like you has a great deal of influence? Think of all the little boys and girls who saw you yesterday as you came through the village. Depend upon it, it has come to their ears how disobedient you were. Now, if they are disobedient, has it ever

struck you how easy it would be for them to say to their parents or guardians, 'Why should we do what we are told? The young squire up at the Hall doesn't, and why should we?'"

Raymond burst into tears. "I never thought of that before," he sobbed. "I will try to be a better *influencer*, and think of the children. Indeed—indeed I will."

"That's right, my dear Raymond; that's right. Try to act like a good, wise man, and not like a silly, conceited little boy. Now dry your eyes and cheer up. I am going to walk down to the rectory with Hugh and Frank; and if you like, this afternoon you shall come with Uncle Fred and me to see a new pony we are thinking of buying for you. You had better hurry off to lessons now, for it is after time, and I expect Uncle Fred is waiting."

VII.

MORE MISCHIEF.

VIVIAN FORBES knew but little of children, their faults and weaknesses, or he would not have placed such great confidence in his young cousin's extraordinarily good conduct in every respect during the first few days that followed upon the dog-cart adventure. He imagined that a complete reformation had been effected in the boy's character, and that this marvellous change for the better was entirely due to the judicious manner in which he had treated him. Of course, as every one knows, a calm always follows a storm, and Raymond certainly was for a time a model of good behaviour. Whether this was owing to his own resolutions to do better, or to fear of another solitary breakfast, it would be somewhat difficult to tell; but when Vivian thought that his ward had overcome, in this sudden way, all his old failings, he was, as one might suppose, very much mistaken.

Colonel Percival, who had so kindly lent his horse to John when he was hurrying after the dog-cart, had called the following day; and finding that no bones

were broken, nor any particular damage done, he had asked Mrs. Ellerton, who was the only person at home, if she would, with her husband, bring Raymond and Dorothy over to luncheon, and to spend the afternoon, on Thursday the following week, at Ashmore, which was the name of his place. Just as he was leaving Vivian Forbes came in, whom he at once recognized as an old acquaintance and included in his invitation, which was, however, declined, as Vivian had already an engagement for that day.

Colonel Percival had several sons—seven in all—and only one daughter, a girl of about ten years old, who was, as might be expected from the fact that she had so many brothers and an invalid mother, a thorough tomboy and somewhat spoiled. At present it so happened that only three of the young Percivals were at home—John, generally called Jack, who was about eleven, and Cecil, who was nearly seven.

Ashmore was quite as large as Winsdale, and Raymond in his heart was rather loath to perceive this as he approached the house through the beautiful, well-wooded grounds. Hugh and Frank Fortescue had also been invited, and Mrs. Ellerton had asked them to drive over with them in the waggonette.

"Oh, so here you are at last!" exclaimed Colonel Percival, as he stood on the front-door steps and watched the carriage drive up. "'Pon my word, you're a nice punctual lot! Why, the young 'uns have been on the look-out for you the last hour or more.—Here,

Ja–ck ! No–ra ! Ce–cil !" he shouted at the top of his stentorian voice ; "come along with you !—Here they are !—The wife will be so pleased to see you, Mrs. Ellerton. She's weak as water, as usual. Does her good to see people, you know ; prevents her from getting moped."

"O Auntie Wosie, I'm afwaid !" exclaimed Dolly, as two spaniels rushed up and commenced barking and jumping upon the new-comers.

"Down, Rover !—down, Spot !" roared the colonel. "Haven't you better manners than that ?—Here, little girl, take my hand, and we'll come indoors. We must find that big girl of mine, though. I thought she was knocking about out of doors as usual.—Here, Nora ! No–ra !" he shouted, as they entered the large oak-panelled hall with a gallery running round the top.

This time he did not call in vain, for a figure came sliding down the banisters of the staircase.

"This is Mrs. Ellerton, Nora, and Mr. Ellerton ; shake hands. Where's your mother ?"

"In the small drawing-room, dad," replied the girl, looking up. She was attired in an old ulster that was much too short in both the skirt and the sleeves ; round her neck was a red comforter tied in a big knot ; an old sailor hat, with the brim half hanging off, was stuck at the back of her head ; her hands were encased in a pair of ragged gloves, every finger of which was through in holes ; her blue serge frock was very short, and showed a pair of sturdy-looking legs en-

cased in thick knitted stockings, and feet covered by a pair of boots that looked heavy enough and almost large enough for the colonel. Her face was not exactly pretty, her features were too strongly marked for that, but she promised to be a remarkably handsome woman, possessing a pair of dark hazel eyes and a luxuriance of dark wavy hair.

"Come in, then," said the colonel, opening a door with a bang, and ushering the whole party into the room, and introducing them to his fragile, delicate little wife, who was reclining on a sofa, propped up with pillows, one fox-terrier lying at her feet and another at her side.

"Now, Nora, you had better take your young friends the round of your menagerie, if they like. You will have loads of time before luncheon.—Ellerton, will you come with me? I have got to go over to the Lower Farm about some swedes. I daresay the ladies will get on well enough without us."

Away the young folks started, Dolly with her hand in Nora's, though she had not half liked putting her dainty glove into contact with that "dweadfully dirty one," as she described it afterwards. The Fortescues had often been to Ashmore before, so they were well acquainted with its inmates, and accustomed to Nora's boyish ways.

"Hullo, you chap!" said that young lady, suddenly giving Raymond a dig in the ribs with a stick she was carrying, "I'm going to call you Travers, like Hugh

and Frank do, and you're to call me Nora. That's my name, and I hope you approve of it."

"Yes," replied Raymond; "it's a pretty one, but—"

"But I suppose you like some other name better. Right you are! What's your own?"

"Raymond Marmaduke."

"Thunder and turf! what a mouthful! Well, I'm glad I'm just Nora, and that's all. What's your little sister's name?"

"I'm Dowothy Muwiel Twavers," answered Dolly for herself, "but everybody calls me Dolly."

"All right; I'll call you Dolly too.—No, don't be afraid; he won't hurt you," for Dolly started back, alarmed by a great white goat that came running up to them. "That's Snowball, and he's quiet as a lamb. Come in here;" and she led the way into a shed where she exhibited her pet fox, who tried to bite every one's legs except her own. "Gently, Brush, old boy; down, now. You shall come out presently if you like," said she, seating herself on an old box. "Come up, then!" The fox jumped into her lap and commenced licking her face.—"Come and pat him, Dolly."

"Oh no, I would wather not; he 'mells howwid!"

"That's nothing," laughed Nora. "But come on; we must hurry up," and she led the way into another shed, where were her rabbits and some white mice, whilst up in the roof an old owl sat winking. Then there were her ducks and fowls to be seen, a

collie dog, a fox-terrier with three blind puppies that charmed Dolly greatly; and last of all there were the stables to be visited, where was her greatest favourite, a beautiful Arabian horse, on whose back she loved to go flying over hedges and ditches: the more hard the jump the better she enjoyed it.

"Isn't he a beauty?" she said as she stroked his arched neck.—"There isn't one to match you in the country, is there, Selim dearest? No, not one."

"He *is* a beautiful creature," said Hugh. "I admire him more each time I see him.—Look at his eyes, Frank; how gentle they are."

"Yes," said his brother; "but I tell you what—I'd rather have a jolly sturdy pony. I'd be afraid of smashing Selim's knees, or overheating him, or something or other."

"Well, I wouldn't, Frank," said Raymond. "A pony is good enough when a fellow's beginning to ride, but afterwards it's quite different. *I* shall only ride the best horses."

"Ha! ha! it's as well you should learn to ride first. It would not be quite so pleasant being pitched over Selim's head as over Billy's, eh?"

"Shut up, Frank."

"What! were you pitched off your pony, Travers?" asked Nora. "Why, that's nothing; I've had heaps of spills. Dad always says one has to have a dozen before one can ride at all."

"I 'spect he means girls when he says that. Boys wouldn't fall off a dozen times."

"Wait till you go out hunting, Travers, and then you'll tell a different tale.—But, hollo! there's the gong; we must race. Come on."

Nora rushed out, dragging Dolly with her; the boys followed.

"Let go my hand, please," cried Dolly in a breathless tone in a minute or two. "I will come by my own self."

"No, no; you had better come with me. We shall get on twice as quick, and we're awfully late as it is."

"But you must. I cannot wun so quickly; I'm quite bweathed out."

"All right, then; we won't go so fast.—Here, boys, steady a bit."

"You wun on, if you like," said Dolly, "and Way will come with me.—Here, Way, I want you to wait for me, 'cause I can't wun like Nowa. My feet aren't big man's ones like hers, you know."

"Oh, you cheeky little creature," laughed Nora, as Raymond took his sister's hand. "You would thank your stars to have big man's feet, as you call them, if you only knew what a lot one can do with them.—Jack, you bring them in. I *must* bolt for Dixon to tidy me up, or mother will be in a fit."

Luncheon is over, and once again the children have turned out of doors, bent on amusement. Mrs. Ellerton had been rather afraid of allowing Dolly to go at

first, but the party begged hard for her, and one and all promised to take the greatest care of the little maid.

It was a glorious afternoon: the air was fresh and invigorating, the sun shone brightly. The children, refreshed by their good luncheon, were all in the wildest spirits. The question was, What should they do, and where should they go? Various plans were proposed, but none seemed to meet with general approbation until at last Jack said, "I say, let us go down and have a game of ducks and drakes on the river."

Every one seemed to like the idea; so away the troop journeyed through two fields, and across a meadow, down to the river's edge. Here they scrambled down the bank to a small shingle composed of round flat stones, and were soon shouting and screaming as the ducks and drakes jumped up and down on the water. For the benefit of those of our readers who do not understand this interesting amusement, we would mention that the ducks and drakes were in reality smooth round stones, which the children picked up and threw in such a manner that they would skim rapidly over the surface of the river, rising from it sometimes as many as seven times. Naturally, the Percivals were thoroughly skilled in the art of throwing, and the Fortescues did not throw badly; but Raymond and Dolly had to be instructed. Dolly was at first rather afraid of overbalancing her-

self and getting a ducking, but the sport was so exciting that she overcame her fears, and clapped her hands with delight the first time her duck rose three times, regardless of the water that splashed all over her pretty white fur coat.

"What's that boat for over there?" inquired Raymond presently.

"Oh, that's the ferry-boat," replied Nora. "It belongs to Lord Lethmore, who lives up in that big house over the other side. You can just see the roof through the trees. If Thomas were here, we might go over; but that old stupid is always out of the way when one wants him."

"I daresay he isn't gone very far," said Jack. "Let's shout for him all together. He can't pretend not to hear us then, though he is as deaf as a post. Now then—one—two—three! Thomas! Thom–as! Thom–a–a–as!"

But the shouts for Thomas were in vain, for no one answered the call.

"I declare, it's a regular shame!" exclaimed Nora. "I shall get dad to complain to Lord Lethmore. I've often heard dad say that some one must be kept here to take passengers over."

"But why can't we row ourselves over?" asked Raymond. "The oars are there, and it's not far across."

"Of course we could do it easy enough," said Jack; "but father has ordered us never to try it. He is afraid of our meeting with an accident."

"It's rather nonsense, *I* think," added Nora. "What harm could there be? He doesn't object to Jack and me going in the coracle down on the pond, and I'm sure that's much more dangerous."

"Well, he is not my guardian, so I'm not bound to obey him," said Raymond; "so in I go."

He sprang lightly into the boat, and proceeded to unfasten the rope that secured it to the tree.

"I'll come with you," said Frank, getting in and trying his best to hoist an oar over the side.

"I will too," said Cecil, clambering in.

"Oh, I *must* go; it will be such fun, and we can't come to any harm, I don't believe," said Nora, as she too got in, giving her ulster a great rent as she did so.—"Come along, Jack."

"Humph! well, I don't want to be left behind, but we shall be in for no end of a row, I'm as certain as certain can be.—Come on, Hugh; give us a hand to help this little lady in."

"No, thank you," said Dolly; "I'm not inclining to go."

"Not going!" exclaimed Raymond. "Why not, Dolly Dot? Surely you aren't afraid. You won't be drowned, you little silly; and besides, who's going to look after you, I'd like to know, for you can't stay by yourself?"

"I'll take care of Dolly till you come back," said Hugh in a quiet tone.

"You stay, Hugh? Oh, stuff! that will never do;

we can't allow that.—Come, get in, Dolly; it's all nonsense."

"No, really, Travers; I'd much sooner stay here," replied Hugh, who somehow had those words that Vivian said to him the other day about acting as he knew to be right, let others do as they might, running in his head. He took Dolly's hand in his, and watched the boat being pushed off by Jack and Raymond, feeling anything but comfortable as sounds of mocking laughter and the word "coward" reached his ears. Dolly heard the word too, and shouted out indignantly at the top of her shrill little voice,—

"Hughie is not a coward, and you're all vewy naughty, and I'm 'shamed of you, Way. I 'spect you'll all be dwownded!"

But Dolly was mistaken in her conjecture, for no one was drowned, and the boat, after a good deal of exertion on the part of its occupants, reached the opposite bank in safety, where Jack secured it to a tree, as he had often seen old Thomas do.

"I say, Travers wouldn't you like to see over Lord Lethmore's place? It's a stunning one. He's away now, and there's only the housekeeper—fat old Mrs. Simpson—and a couple of housemaids left in the house, so we can see it all over if we like," said Nora.

"Yes," replied Raymond, "I should like it very much, if the others do too. Why, it's quite close, and from the other side of the river it looked so far in amongst the trees."

On journeyed Nora and her four boy-companions, and ere long reached the house. Frank gave a great tug at the door-bell, which was soon answered by a pleasant-looking young housemaid. She knew all the party except Raymond, so saying, "I suppose, miss, you want to see Mrs. Simpson," she asked them to follow her to the housekeeper's room. It was a snug little apartment, and its mistress looked very contented with her lot as she sat in a big arm-chair by the fire, a warm woollen shawl over her shoulders, and her knitting in her hands.

"Lor', Miss Percival, is it you? You *have* got a party of young gentlemen with you, to be sure.—How do you, Master Frank? How's your mamma? Why, I declare, you *do* grow! You must be nearly as tall as Master Hugh.—And who is this? I don't seem to know his face," she asked, laying a hand on Raymond's shoulder and looking down at him through her spectacles.

"Oh, that's Travers—Raymond Travers, you know; old Mr. Travers's nephew. He's the master of Winsdale now, is that big man. I'm awfully jealous of him, I can tell you," said Jack; whilst Frank added—

"You must treat the squire with proper respect, or you'll catch it, Mrs. Simpson, for he thinks himself a tre–mendous swell."

"Shut up with that humbug, Frank," muttered Raymond half angrily, half laughing; for the housekeeper, with clasped hands and upraised eyes, was saying in a most emphatic manner,—

"Well, I never! Times must be changed up at Winsdale to have a little hinnocent like you, instead of that gouty, crab-apply old gentleman! And how do you like Winsdale, my dear? I had heard that you had arrived; but, Lor' bless me! I never dreamt but that you were a nearly growed-up young gentleman, soon a-coming of age."

"I like Winsdale awfully," replied Raymond, "and I only wish I had come of age. It is *such* a bother to be only a boy. I want to be a man as quick as ever I can."

"And when you're a man, Master Travers, why, then you'll be wishing you were a boy again. That's the way of the world, as you'll find out soon enough. How old are you, my dear?"

"Seven, and nearly a half."

"Come, Mrs. Simpson," interrupted Nora; "never mind Travers's age, or your age, or any one's age. It isn't at all amusing finding out ages, you know, and it's very rude too. I remember you told me so once when I asked you how old you were. We want to show Travers all over the house. Will you come with us? or can we go by ourselves? We know the rooms; and I suppose the keys are in the doors, the same as usual."

"Yes, they are, Miss Percival; and just for once in a way I'll let you go by yourselves, whilst I pick up all these stitches I've dropped. The windows are all open in the sitting-rooms, because I'm expecting his

lordship next week, and he can't a-bear for the rooms to smell musty-like. Now, be off, all of you, and mind you are careful and don't get into no mischief. You must look after the young gentlemen, Miss Percival, and see they don't break anything; and if you are all very good, perhaps I shall have some goodies ready against you come back."

"Hurrah! three cheers for Mrs. Simpson!" shouted Jack as the party left the room.

From one splendid apartment to another they journeyed, and Raymond could not but feel impressed by the grandeur of all he saw, and the harrowing thought would come into his mind that his beloved Winsdale could not be compared with Lethmore. Covetous feelings followed. Why should Lord Lethmore possess "sweller" things than he did? Why shouldn't he have some of those splendid suits of armour at Winsdale? They would look just as well there as here. The billiard-room was much larger than his. There were more pictures, too, and some just the sort he liked. And then those beautiful statues. Why, actually he had not *one* statue at Winsdale; and look at the numbers in that room alone! It was most unfair, he thought.

The children were now in the large drawing-room, and certainly there were collected there such a host of lovely things, that the most saintly person might have been forgiven for feeling a little envious of their fortunate possessor. But what Raymond coveted most,

and what he and all his companions admired most, were some exquisite marble statues that Lord Lethmore had brought from Italy. He was a wealthy man; his wife had been dead for many years; he had no children; and he and the nephew who would succeed him in both title and estates had one great bond of union between them, which was an innate love for the beautiful: so that when the old man spent large sums of money upon objects that pleased the eye merely, he knew that he was accumulating that which would be equally appreciated by his successor.

The children were gazing in silent admiration at the figure of a little winged boy, who, with a piteous expression on his face, was bending over a dog lying at his feet, transfixed with an arrow, and evidently in its death-agony.

"Isn't he a beauty?" exclaimed Nora, at last breaking through the silence. "I do long to steal him and carry him off with me; he would look *so* jolly in my bedroom."

"He's a deal too good for a bedroom," said Frank. "If he were mine, I would put him in a large glass case in father's study."

"If he were mine," said Cecil, "I'd put some clothes on him. He looks so cold, poor little chap!"

"Statues are never dressed. Don't you know that, goose?" said Jack.

"Well, then, I like Madame Tussaud's sort of

statues better than these. They look comfortabler."

"'Tis his white eyes make him look so cold," said Raymond. "I believe he would look much jollier with pupils; don't you?"

"Not a bad idea that, Travers," said Nora.

"It would make him look more alive; only he'd have to have eyebrows and eyelashes too."

"Why shouldn't we try how he would look with them?" said Frank.—"Look, Nora, I've a bit of burned cork in my pocket. I was giving myself a pretence moustache the last time I had these clothes on, and it was such a good cork. I remember I thought I'd save it. Here 'tis;" and he produced a small pointed cork carefully wrapped up in a piece of paper.

"What a joke!" said Nora. "Here goes. It can't hurt, because we can wash it off afterwards;" and jumping upon a chair, Nora proceeded to give the little winged boy magnificent large black eyes and very thick eyebrows. She sprang down, and they all stood at a distance to admire her handiwork.

"I declare he looks twice as well!" exclaimed Raymond. "He's quite perfect now.—Give me the cork a minute, please, Nora. I may as well give this Apollo eyes too."

In a few minutes Apollo possessed not only eyes and eyebrows, but also a very handsome moustache. The children were in fits of laughter.

"I want the cork, Travers," said Frank, snatching

it out of his hand; and hastening up to the companion statue—a most exquisite Venus—he proceeded to give her eyes, eyebrows, hair, and even went the length of rubbing a little black on her lips and cheeks, to give her "a colour," as he called it. He was standing on a chair, and had just finished these improvements, when the whole party were well-nigh frightened out of their wits by seeing Frank taken up, as it were, by the scruff of his neck and lifted high up in mid-air by a tremendously tall man, who, unperceived by them, had approached from behind. The Percivals recognized Lord Lethmore, but to the rest the new-comer was a complete stranger.

"And so *this* is the way in which my property is treated when I'm away, is it, young man?" said Lord Lethmore, as he restored the terrified Frank to his feet. "*This* is the way in which Mrs. Simpson protects my goods and chattels, is it? May I ask whom I have to thank for all these marvellous decorations?"

"We are very sorry," muttered the children almost in a breath, at the same time staring up at the great man before them, who did not seem satisfied with this answer; for, shaking back his long gray hair and stroking his patriarchal-looking beard, he said, gazing sharply in their faces, with his keen black eyes gleaming from under his shaggy eyebrows,—

"I asked you *who* you were. Am I to understand that you are all called 'Very-sorry'? Surely some of you are Percivals?"

The children found it impossible to help smiling; and Jack replied, "Yes, Nora and Cecil and I are Percivals;" whilst Raymond, little accustomed to exercise any control over his feelings, burst into a merry peal of laughter.

"Boy, come here!" said the giant. "What do you mean by laughing when you ought to be crying your eyes out? What's your name, and where do you come from? You are not a 'Very-sorry,' I can see."

"I'm Raymond Marmaduke Travers, and I live at my own place at Winsdale," answered the small boy boldly, looking up into his questioner's face.

"So you live at your *own* place, do you? In my young days little boys possessed nothing of their own."

"That must have been ages and ages ago then," said Raymond fearlessly. "People must have got more sense now; for Winsdale's mine, and no one else's, though I'm not grown up yet."

"No, you certainly are not grown up; you are a perfect pigmy. May I ask, with all due respect, if you lent a helping hand in this mischief?"

"If you mean about corking the statues, why, of course I did. I started the idea, 'cause I thought it would be such an improvement, you know. I did the Apollo myself."

"Ah, indeed! You seem to be a remarkably clever young man, and your accomplices, I suppose, are to be found amongst the rest of the party. Who's the artist who was at work when I came in?"

"Oh, I'm Frank Fortescue, and I live at the rectory at Winsdale."

"Humph! a nice lot of you. And now one more question. How do you all come to be here?"

"Mrs. Simpson let us come, because we wanted to show Travers the place. He is spending the day with us," explained Nora.

"Oh, now I'm beginning to understand a bit about it.—And how does Mr. Travers like the place, may I inquire? Do you prefer it to Winsdale?"

"Well," said Raymond reluctantly, "it is a much bigger place than mine, and there are a good lot of things here that I haven't got; but all the same, I don't know that I'd care to chop. Lord Lethmore must be a queer sort of old chap, I should think; and —Be quiet, Jack! *What* are you kicking me for?— and he has collected a real good store of things—just like a museum. I like the armour awfully!—Nora, what's the matter? why do you pinch me? I'm not saying anything wrong."

"It's Lord Lethmore himself!" whispered Jack under his breath.

"Bosh and nonsense!" said Raymond aloud. "I know better than that. *She* said he wasn't coming till next week."

"What was that your friend said?" inquired the stranger.

"Only he was trying to stuff me up, and pretending

you were Lord Lethmore. Why, a baby would know better than that!"

"But I don't see why you should not believe him. Have you ever seen Lord Lethmore?"

"Oh no, never. But you see you don't look like a lord."

"Ehem! indeed! And how do you suppose a lord looks?"

"Well, let me see. I've only seen two. One was Lord Netley-Carew—I saw him at a review I went to with uncle. He *did* look like a lord, if you like it. You should have seen his uniform, and his medals, and his cocked hat with plumes; and then he had such a big nose, and a moustache with the longest points to it I ever saw in all my life. He *was* splendid!" said Raymond enthusiastically.

"And the other lord—was he splendid too?"

"Oh, the other one I saw the other day. He came to call on Aunt Rosie, though he pretended he had come to call on me too. He was Lord Glenbower, and he looked just like the young prince in one of Dolly's fairy-tale books. Of course his dress wasn't *quite* the same; but he had long flaxen hair, all wavy, parted in the middle; and his moustache was all silky, and drooping down as if it had no strength; and his eyes were big blue ones, and he could hardly keep them open; and he talked *so* slowly, as if it was too much trouble; and—but you are laughing."

"Am I? Well, never mind, young man, never

mind; but just take a good look at me, for I'm another lord, only a different looking one to the two you have seen before. I'm Lord Lethmore;" and the stranger drew himself up to his full height, which was very great—for he was six feet seven, and broad in proportion, and looked down with a grim smile at the handsome little fellow who so coolly doubted his identity. Poor Raymond! he felt hot and uncomfortable all over. All he could do was to stammer out in a low voice,—

"I beg your pardon; indeed, indeed I did not know, because Mrs. Simpson said you were not coming until next week, and—and I thought you were—were a man who looked after the things, like the museum man."

"Right you were too, in one way," said his lordship, laughing. "But never mind, my lad, never mind. The wisest make mistakes sometimes. And I do look after my things; so now I would like to know, young people, what's to be done about my statues."

"It's only burned cork. Frank Fortescue had a bit in his pocket; and if I may have some soap and water, I'll soon wash it off. I wouldn't have done it myself, or let the boys do it, if I had thought it could do any harm," said Nora in an eager voice.

"There, I'll forgive you this once, all the lot of you; and Mrs. Simpson must do the washing, as she let you come in here by yourselves. But mind, children, no more practical jokes of this kind, or I shall

have to give orders that none of you are to be admitted here during my absence. Come along now; we will go to see Mrs. Simpson. The good old soul doesn't know I'm back in England even; and the afternoon was so lovely that I took the short cut, and walked up from the station. Won't she be in a state of mind? Here we are; you go in first."

Nora opened the door, the boys followed in after her, and after them came Lord Lethmore.

VIII.

THE FRUITS OF DISOBEDIENCE.

UP jumped Mrs. Simpson from her comfortable arm-chair; down fell her knitting to the floor.

"Ah, Mrs. Simpson! And how are you? You see I've taken you by surprise, as usual."

"Yes, indeed, my lord. I didn't reckon on your coming till next week for certain. I hope your lordship's quite well?"

"Yes; I'm as hale and hearty as a man at my time of life can be, thanks, Mrs. Simpson. And as I'm uncommonly hungry, I wouldn't mind having something to eat. What's all this stuff?"

"That's some candied fruit I got out for the young folks, my lord. I promised them some if they were well-behaved and didn't get into no mischief. I'll go and order something to be got ready for your lordship directly."

"Wait a minute. Did you say the young people were only to have these sweeties if they had been good? Just go into the big drawing-room and see

that all's right there before you give them to them. I'll take care of the dish till you come back."

Mrs. Simpson gave a doubtful look at the children; and then having wrapped her shawl closer round her, and pushed her spectacles more firmly on her nose, she left the room.

"Now, then, help yourselves," said Lord Lethmore. "Eat away to your hearts' content, or fill your pockets, if you like it better; only leave me the dish, for I promised to take care of *that*."

Nora helped herself first, and stowed away some of the delicious goodies in her ulster pocket—luckily there was no hole in it. The day before she had carried some fish in it up from the river; but that made no difference—every one knows their own tastes best. The boys soon cleared the dish; and then Jack suggested that they ought to be hurrying home, as it must be nearly four o'clock. So they bade their host good-bye, and started off on their way back before Mrs. Simpson returned. They soon reached the river-side; but great was their dismay to find that the ferry-boat was gone! Not a sign of it was to be seen. How were they to cross the river? What was to be done? They shouted at the top of their voices for Thomas; but their cries were in vain, for no Thomas appeared.

"Thunder and turf! this is a pretty mess we are in," said Nora. "I tell you what—we must go up the bank to where that old plank is laid across."

"What's the good of that, I'd like to know?" asked Jack. "Why, it's as rotten as can be. I know I wouldn't venture on it for something."

"No, nor I," replied Nora; "but you forget how the trees hang over the water there. I thought we could cling on to them to support our weight, and get over like that. I did it once when I was out fishing with Bertie, and got over safe enough."

"You never told us that before."

"No, I know I didn't, 'cause Bertie said I wasn't to, or you boys would be always trying it, and of course it's pretty dangerous. Bertie has often done it, and it was 'cause he laughed at me, and said I couldn't do it, that I did it, just to show him he had made a mistake for once in his life."

"Well, if you could get across like that, why, we can; and really I don't see what else we can do.—Come on, boys. Where in the name of fortune that old idiot Thomas can be I can't imagine, unless it's later than we thought, and he's gone home; anyhow, I always thought he left the boat."

In a few minutes they reached the spot. The river was very narrow in this part, and across it was placed an old plank. It had been there for years and years, and had worn out through old age and use. Across the river, though, on either side the branches of trees growing on the banks stretched over so far as to form an almost perfect arch.

"Now, Nora, you go first."

Nora stopped only a moment to take off her hat and secure it by the elastic to the belt of her ulster, for the tattered brim kept on coming into her eyes; and then springing as lightly as she could on the end of the plank, she grasped hold of the branches over her head, and working one hand over the other, with just the tips of her toes every now and then touching the plank, by dint of sundry jerks and swingings to and fro of her body, and a good deal of exertion, she reached the opposite bank in safety.

"Hurrah!" shouted the boys.

"Hurrah!" shouted Nora. "Just be careful about the middle part; the branches there aren't extra strong. Send Cecil next. He must give a good swing to catch the bough this side, tell him."

Cecil was a wiry boy, and, young though he was, was nimble and active as a cat, so that he did not experience much difficulty in getting across.

Frank followed; but was suddenly seized with a fit of laughter, caused by his catching a glimpse of Nora watching his progress, her face encircled with the brim of her hat, which she had broken almost off in unfastening it from her belt. The consequence was that for a moment he let go the bough to which he was clinging and stood on the plank. Jack shouted out to him not to be an idiot, so he caught the bough again in such frantic haste that his own hat fell off and went slowly floating down the stream.

"Hilli-ho!" he exclaimed, as he landed at last

on dry ground. "What a bother! I expect the mother will be no end vexed, for that's my Sunday hat, and quite new too. Oh dear me! I wish I hadn't been such a donkey as to laugh, but 'pon my word it was all your fault, Nora; you looked *so* comical with that old brim round your face. It wouldn't have mattered much if you had lost that hat of yours, I should imagine. It's a beauty, and no mistake. But what an age Travers is! Why can't he make haste?—Hurry up, Travers," he shouted. "Don't keep us here all night."

Raymond and Jack were engaged in an eager discussion on the opposite bank. Raymond had been declaring that it was perfect nonsense saying that the plank was unsafe. Had it not borne Frank's weight in the middle, the most dangerous part? He wasn't going to fag himself clambering along with his hands; he should just run lightly over.

"For mercy's sake, Travers, don't do anything so awfully mad! Why, look at the plank, if you've any eyes in your head. Can't you see how rotten it is?"

"No," replied Raymond stoutly. "It looks strong enough for me, so I'm going."

"Oh, don't! please, don't!" cried Jack, seizing hold of his arm to detain him; but Raymond broke away, and the next minute was on the plank.

In his heart, now he was on it, he felt rather nervous, but he would not go back for fear of being laughed at. The plank felt so rickety, and seemed to go

up and down at each step. Now it was going dreadfully deep down; he supposed it would bound up again in a minute. Suddenly there was a loud crack. His friends on the banks gave a great scream; he gave a frantic one, made a fruitless attempt to snatch at one of the branches over his head, and the next moment plunge he went into the cold, cold water! It closed over his head—down he sank deeper and deeper. "I'm going to be drowned!" was his first thought. "God can save me," was his next.

Gradually he rose again to the surface. The water was in his eyes and nose and mouth, and he felt stifled. Fortunately it flashed into his mind what he had heard about struggling in the water, so he tried to be as still as he could. "Help! help!" he cried. Something knocked against him. It was part of the broken plank, and by making a tremendous effort he caught hold of it, and thus managed to keep himself afloat.

"Hold on!" cried Jack from his side of the river. "I'm off to get some one to haul you out."

"Hold on!" cried Nora. "I can run quickly, and will soon get some one to help you."

"Let me go," said Frank; "I can run as quick as you."

"Yes; but I know all the short cuts. You stay and cheer him up."

Away she flew. Frank and Cecil stood hand in hand on the bank, and commenced to talk to the unfortunate Raymond.

"Hold on, old fellow. Never fear; they'll soon be back."

"Ugh! ugh! O Frank, it's so cold and horrid!"

"Never mind; don't think about the cold. Couldn't you manage to get your legs on to that piece of wood? I should think you could almost lie on it."

"Oh! oh! ah! I'll try; but oh, my fingers seem frozen!" However, by dint of making some desperate struggles Raymond succeeded at last in resting the whole weight of his body on the broken piece of plank. He clasped it with both arms; his face lay against the rough wood; one foot was on the plank, the other in the water.

"Isn't that easier?"

"Yes, a bit; but oh, I wish some one would come!"

"Don't get funky, Travers, whatever you do. Keep up your courage like a man. I say, do you know you are going down stream? The current is carrying you along."

"Oh, what shall I do? I know I shall be drowned!" Then, more to himself than his friends, the poor boy went on: "But then Aunt Rosie says God is never cruel or unkind, and can get the difficultest things done if he likes. Please, God, do help me and have me pulled out! It's so cold here; and I'm not eight yet! Oh! please, God, I didn't think it was so awfully wicked going on the plank,—and indeed I'll never, never do it again; and I'll try to be always good!"

"Hollo, Travers!" shouted Frank; "there's no opening here, and we can't get over this prickly wire. There's a gate just above though. Cheer up!"

Raymond went floating steadily on. He was now intensely cold, and was beginning to feel a sensation of numbness creeping over his limbs. He glanced towards the banks. No one was to be seen. Had they left him? Was he to die all alone in this dreadful river? Oh, if God would only send some one quick! "O God," he cried, "*do* save me! I promise I'll try to be so good, and never be disobedient, and keep away all the giants!" If he died, he would like to go to heaven. But oh! he didn't want to die yet—he didn't want to leave Dolly, and uncle, and aunt, and Cousin Vivian, and Winsdale, and he couldn't take them all to heaven with him. Aunt Rosie said father and mother loved God, and were in heaven; but that was no use, for he wouldn't know them when he saw them. Father died before Dolly was born, and mother died when Dolly was two days old, so how *could* he remember them? They had been always good, so God took them to heaven; but he hadn't. He didn't deserve to go there, he had been so dreadfully wicked sometimes; but then God was kind, and loved little children, so perhaps he would save a poor little boy not even eight yet, when he was sorry for being naughty.

He was turning a corner of the river. He was getting nearer the bank. Oh, what was that? Bump,

bump went the plank against the bank. Using to the utmost his small amount of remaining strength, Raymond succeeded in dragging himself up the slippery green bank. His fingers were so benumbed that he could scarcely hold on to the rushes so as to pull himself up; as to his feet, he could not feel them. He reached the top. For one minute the little fellow stoop upright, and raising his eyes and clasping his hands towards the blue sky overhead, he cried aloud, "Oh, thank you, God! I *will* be a good boy!" and then fell with his face on the grass insensible.

We will now go back to see what has become of Hugh and Dorothy, whom we left watching their companions crossing the river in the ferry-boat. Having seen them land safely on the opposite bank, they decided that they would walk to a wood a short way further down the river, to gather some of the snowdrops that grew there in abundance. Hugh's hat was filled with the snowy blossoms, and Dolly had a large bunch in each hand, when at last, having wandered much further than they had intended, they turned round to make their way home. Dolly every now and then would run on in front and try to persuade Hugh to run races with her; which he would not do, as he was afraid of upsetting the burden he was carrying. He was plodding carefully along, when suddenly a shrill cry from Dolly startled him. A second before he had seen her pulling away at the rushes that grew on the river's bank, and felt relieved

when he saw her running towards him, though she was evidently in a state of great excitement.

"Oh, come!" she cried, seizing hold of his hand to pull him on quicker. "A poor leetle dead boy! Oh, it's so dweadful!"

Hugh put down his hat and hurried to the spot. There, face downwards, on the edge of the bank, lay the motionless figure of a boy, whose clothes were soaked with water. He knelt down by the body and gently touched the shoulder. There was no movement, so he tenderly lifted the prostrate head and gazed on the closed eyelids and ghastly pale features.

"Oh, it's Way! my Way!" cried Dolly, sinking down on her knees by Hugh's side, who, struck dumb by the unexpected discovery of his friend in this pitiful condition, was for a moment utterly paralyzed with the shock. He soon pulled himself together, and said to Dolly in a choked, hoarse voice,—

"Get up—there's a dear. I'll try and drag him further up the bank."

By dint of exerting all his strength Hugh succeeded in pulling Raymond's inanimate form further from the water's edge, whilst Dorothy watched him with eager eyes and little hands clenched tightly together. He next unfastened his collar, and tried to chafe his icy hands. Dorothy knelt once more beside her brother, and taking his head upon her lap, she pushed the wet locks of hair back from his forehead, and implored him in most heartrending tones to open

his eyes. Her entreaties seemed of no avail: the deeply-fringed lids moved not, there was no sign of life about the pale, pale face. Poor little soul! she burst out crying at last, and watered the marble features with her tears as she pressed kiss after kiss upon them. Hugh left her and ran off as fast as he could to get help, seeing how fruitless were his own efforts to restore his friend to animation.

"Way! dear Way! *do* open your eyes!—just a leetle bit, dearie Way! I'm your own Dolly Dot! O Way, if you love me, don't be dead yet! I will die too, Way—I will, I will! And you're *so* cold! Let me get your head up and cuddle you up nice and warm! There, you're more comfy now, and my coat will keep you so hot!" and Dolly unbuttoned her fur coat and tried to wrap it round Raymond's head as it lay in her arms.

The heat either of the coat or of the loving little arms around his neck so far revived him that in a minute or two he opened his eyes and looked up in her face.

The little girl gave a cry of joy; but was bitterly disappointed when a second after they closed again. "O Way! Way! *please* don't be dead any more! *Please* open your eyes!—do! do!"

Raymond did open them once more, and a slight tinge of colour appeared in his cheeks as with a faint smile he said, "Is it you, Dolly?"

Just at this juncture Hugh returned, and with him

came Nora and a couple of men, whilst a short distance behind were Cecil, Frank, and Colonel Percival. The reason why Frank and Cecil had not returned to the bank, as they had intended, was that they had espied Colonel Percival strolling along a couple of fields off, and had raced to tell him of the accident and bring him to Raymond's assistance. All felt immensely relieved when they saw the boy was safe on dry ground, and conscious. One of the men took him up in his arms, and Dolly trotted by his side to see "he took care of her Way pwoperly."

On their way back to the house they met Jack with Lord Lethmore and old Thomas coming down the river in the ferry-boat. That was no time for explanations or inquiries; but it transpired afterwards that old Thomas, coming back and finding his boat on the wrong side of the river, had to walk two miles to the nearest bridge, and then determined to punish the folks who had meddled with his boat by taking it out of the way and locking it up in a disused old boat-house.

Arrived at the house, Raymond was carried straight upstairs, and in a few minutes had his uncle and aunt, who were greatly alarmed at his appearance, with him. Old nurse now came upon the scene, and banished every one excepting Mrs. Ellerton from the room. She had lived in the family for five-and-twenty years, and was well used to boys and their ways. Before his aunt knew what she was going to do, she had Raymond's clothes off and was rubbing him all

over before the fire with a rough flannel to get up his circulation. He was too weak to make any resistance; and in a few minutes afterwards he found himself in a hot bath, out of which he was popped, unwiped, into a blanket which Mrs. Ellerton had been holding before the fire. Wrapped in that from head to toe, so that only his face was visible, nurse put him into bed with a hot-water bottle to his feet, and then insisted upon feeding him with a cupful of coffee with a teaspoonful of brandy in it, which he thought the nastiest thing next to castor oil he had ever tasted. However, he began to feel very comfortable and warm and sleepy; and when Mrs. Ellerton bent over him to give him a kiss—for nurse said he must not be talked to—he said, "Good-night, Auntie Rosie," and a very few minutes afterwards was in a sound slumber.

IX.

A LABOUR OF LOVE.

SPRING succeeded winter, and summer followed spring. It was a glorious summer. The sun shone high in the clear blue sky; the trees and fields looked of a richer and more beautiful hue than usual; the garden seemed a perfect paradise of lovely flowers; the little birds sang in joyous tones; and all nature appeared so happy, bright, and gay, that one could but marvel at its perfection as he gazed upon it.

At Winsdale affairs have been progressing very quietly for some time. The young squire has grown quite accustomed to his position, and tries in a way really wonderful in one so young to do his duty. It was not until the warm sunshine of spring came that he entirely got over the effects of his fall into the river; but now he is as well and sturdy as ever. Little Dorothy's hair has grown a good deal, and she looks as sweet and pretty as any one could wish. Vivian Forbes is away in Norway, but talks of coming over to see his wards early in September.

This is August, a lovely day, and luncheon is just

over. The party are in the act of leaving the dining-room, when Raymond says,—

"I say, auntie, can we go down and see old Mrs. Grimes this afternoon—Dolly and I, you know—and take her the custard pudding ourselves? You know it's only just outside the park gate, and we shall be quite safe. *Do* say yes."

"Well, my dearest boy, I don't object to your going there; only you must not go any further, nor get into any mischief on the way. Uncle and I are going over to Ashmore to a garden-party, and I had intended to drop the pudding myself on the way there. Oh! and children, after tea you had better go for a good long walk with nurse."

Whilst she was speaking Mrs. Ellerton had nodded her head so vigorously that her cap had to give several hops and one decided jump; but at last it reposed in peace, though crookedly, and its wearer left the room and shut the door.

"Now come on, Dolly Dot; what are you waiting for?"

"Don't you fink, Way, that only the pudding is a vewy leetle to take the poor old woman, when we are wich and have such lots of fings to eat ourselves?"

"Well, I do. Let's see—what can we take her? Oh, I say! there's oceans of things here. We'll take her some beef—she's sure to like that; and I heard uncle say beef is strengthening. Do you think she can eat more than that? Look!" said he, holding

up a great junk he had hewn off the end of the pressed beef with the big carving-knife.

"That will be a lubly bit. Give it to me," cried Dolly. "I've got an old newspaper here, and will pack it up in the basket. See! Mowwison put it here weady with the pudding in it."

"Oh, but that's a big basket; we must put some more things in. It isn't half full yet."

"Wouldn't she like two helpings of meat?" asked Dolly. "I do, when it's my favourite ones."

"Of course she would. Let's take her some of this salmon, it's such a pretty colour, though I don't like it 'cause of the vinegar. Oh, bother! I never knew it was such hard stuff to help."

Very soon the basket was as full as it could hold; for in addition to salmon, pressed beef, cucumber, two potatoes, one jam-tart, two pieces of Swiss roll, a slice of cake, a bit of Gorgonzola cheese, a hunch of bread, two salt-spoonfuls of salt, and three plums, all done in separate little newspaper packets, there was the custard pudding in a dish, fortunately not a large one, on the top.

"Here's your sun-bonnet, Dolly. Oh! and here's my cap," said Raymond in the hall. "Come on! Won't Mrs. Grimes be glad to see us! She told nurse she'd only seen us once to speak to since we came, and you know she's a tenant, and we ought to be kind to her."

"In course we ought," replied Dolly. "She must

be dweadfully lonely, too, poor fing! I heard nurse say she can't get out of bed to do nuffing for herself. S'matica and 'matics must be cuwious fings. Why, I could get out of bed when I had measles even, you know, Way."

"Yes; so could I, too. Don't you remember the day I got out to get some lemonade, 'cause I was so thirsty and broiling hot?"

"Oh yes," laughed Dolly, "I wemembers. And you dwank the whole gweat jug; and nurse was vewy angwy with you, and said you would get measles inside out!"

On went the little pair, carrying the basket between them, and chatting merrily the whole time. Their hearts were light within them, and both felt happy in the thought that they were going to do a good deed.

At last they reached Mrs. Grimes's door, and gave a gentle tap. No answer. Another tap louder, and another louder still, had to be given before a voice was heard to say, "Come in." Then in they walked, straight up to the side of the chair-bed on which the old woman was lying.

"If you please, Mrs. Grimes," said Raymond politely, "Aunt Rosie has sent you a custard pudding, and Dolly and I have brought you some other things in this basket, which we hope you will like."

The invalid stared in amazement at the children. Raymond, scarlet fisher-cap in one hand, holding the

basket with the other, his brown curly locks waving over his shoulders, attired in a white woollen jersey, white serge breeches buttoned tight over his knees, a sash of red turkey twill, tied at the side, round his waist, and red stockings, was standing looking at her with his usual bright, fearless expression; whilst wee Dorothy, with one hand resting on her brother's arm, in a loose white frock, bare legs, with a big white sun-bonnet framing her sweet little face with its cloud of golden curls, was standing on tip-toe gazing at her with a most wistful expression in her beautiful blue eyes.

"Oh dear! oh dear!" at last almost gasped out Mrs. Grimes. "Well, I never! And who'd ha' thought of a nice young gennelm'n—the squire heself too—and a bonnie young lady, comin' to see the likes o' me! And I in bed, too, with the seecatica and them rheumatics that bad that I can't get out to welcome 'ee. But, bless me! you're standin'. Sit 'ee down now; there be twa cheers."

"Never mind about us, Mrs. Grimes—we can get the chairs, thank you; and we're awfully sorry you have got to stay in bed. Nurse told Auntie Rosie about you, and Auntie Rosie was going to bring you the pudding herself this afternoon, only I asked if we might come with it instead. You see you're one of my tenants, Mrs. Grimes, and I think I ought to see after my tenants when they are ill, if I want to try to be a good landlord; don't you?"

"Bless your dear 'art, sir; 'tain't but few landlords as troubles 'emselves about their sick tenants, or well ones either, so long as 'em pays their rints. But there—it be a real pleasure to 'ear a young gennelm'n a-talkin' like that."

"Is the pain vewy bad?" asked Dorothy's soft little voice.

"Yes, missie, it be precious bad at times—chief at night times. It's 'ard to bear; and the pain leaves me that cramped like all over me bones that I can't a-move meself."

"But if you can't move, how do you manage about your room and all that?" asked Ray. "Who does things for you?"

"There's a neighbour o' mine as comes in when she can, sir; but it be 'er washin'-day to-day, and she could only give me 'bout five minutes or so this mornin', just to get me a bit o' breakfast, and put me a few taties ready on that plate there for me dinner."

"But couldn't you pay some one to wait on you?"

"Oh no! Bless the child! Oh no, sir! Why, I gets seven shillin's a week 'lowed me by me son, the schoolmaster at Salisbury (he always was a clever lad that at his book-larning), and out o' that there's two and sixpence 'as to go for rint. Bless 'ee! why, if 'tweren't for the lad I'd 'ave to go to the 'ouse, and be degraced like in me old age. Me son is me only child now. I 'ad seven, and the rest were all tuk; and 'e's got four childer of 'is own now. The

Lord bless 'im! for he was allers a good son to 'is old mother."

"Way, she's only had potatoes for her dinner," said Dolly. "I 'spect Mrs. Gwimes would like some of our nice fings; don't you?"

"Of course," said Ray, springing up. "I quite forgot the basket. I was thinking about the rent. We are going to give you some dinner, Mrs. Grimes. May I get a plate off the shelf?"

"There be one over these taties, sir. Don't you go for to trouble yourself," said she, lifting the plate off another that was on the small table by her bedside, and revealing three miserable-looking cold potatoes.

"Was that all your dinner?" asked Ray.

"Yes, sir; I 'aven't a-touched it yet. I've only 'ad cold taties every day sin' Sunday week, and some'ow me inside seemed to turn against 'em to-day."

"Well, never mind now," cried Raymond. "Look here! we've brought you a feast, and we want to see you eat a jolly good dinner. You'll feel twice as strong after it, I can tell you," he added confidently.

The poor old woman watched the unpacking of the basket with astonished eyes, as packet after packet was opened for her to inspect the contents. There were only four plates in the cottage, so when they were filled the other good things had to be left in the pieces of newspaper.

"Here's a tray," said Raymond, producing one from a corner. "Now I'm going to put it comfy for you,

like I have it when I'm ill. What will you have first? some salmon? I don't like it, nor does Dolly, but all grown-up persons do."

"No, thank you, sir. I'd fancy that now, with the kuckumber, for me supper; but I'd like a bit o' that beef now. Gracious alive!—no, sir; not all that. Why, that's enough for two or three dinners."

Raymond managed to cut off two slices with Mrs. Grimes's very blunt knife, and then the dinner commenced in real earnest. The children watched with delighted eyes, though not half enough was eaten to satisfy them. After some meat and bread, a jam tart, a slice of Swiss roll, and a small slice of pudding, the invalid declared she could not swallow another mouthful of anything, but asked if Raymond would be so very kind as to get her a drink of water from the pump out at the back. Raymond had once got wet through pumping a glass of water for himself, so he knew now how to manage. He put the glass just inside the trough, and then pumped as hard as he could. In a minute or two the water flowed into the glass, and he carried it carefully in, wiping the bottom with his handkerchief.

"Thank 'ee, little master; thank 'ee. May every blessin' rest on 'ee for your goodness to a poor bed-ridden old creature."

"Oh, we are awfully glad to help you. Where shall we put these remains away for you? It looks so untidy to leave them all here. We'll wash the

plates, too, if you will tell us where there's a cloth."

"Up on the nail outside; and the vittals better go in the cupboard. But don't 'ee trouble, sir, and little missie. They'll bide a while right enough."

Disregarding this remonstrance, Raymond and Dolly commenced putting away carefully the remains of the feast, and then they took the plates outside, where Raymond pumped water on them and Dolly dried them; and afterwards, without any smashes, they were safely put in their place on the shelf.

"There now; that looks much nicer," said Raymond triumphantly, looking round.

"But the gwound, and the gwate, and the window—oh, look, Way! they are so vewy dweadfully dirty!" whispered Dolly. "O Way, couldn't we make it lubly and clean for her? It would be like doing it for God, you know."

"How do you mean?" asked Raymond softly.

"Why, in the Bible it says 'bout 'one of the least of these,' and I 'spect Mrs. Gwimes must be one of that sort of ones; don't you?"

"You're right, Dolly Dot; anyhow, we'll have a try.—Mrs. Grimes," he said, approaching the bed, "we want very much to clean up your room for you, Dolly and I.—Oh, I say, Dolly, she's asleep!"

And so she was. The poor old creature had not had such a good meal for many a long day, and worn out by pain she had dropped off, and was now sleep-

ing profoundly, as in a few minutes her snores evinced.

"We will do it now whilst she's asleep, and won't she be surprised when she wakes! But we must be awfully quiet, so as not to wake her too soon. Oh dear! I wish I had something to go over my clothes. They were all clean on for lunch, and nurse will be in such a grind if I get them black."

"Look, Way, there is a big apwon upon that hook. Won't that do if you tie it wound your neck, 'cause it's so long? Oh! and that big wed handkerchief will do for me for an apwon wound my neck. I fink I'll take my bonnet off, 'cause then I can see better."

Very softly and quietly the children set to work. First they did the grate. There was no fire burning; so Raymond, with his sleeves turned up above his elbows, lifted out the cinders and ashes as well as he could with his hands, and put them into a piece of paper that Dolly held; and then, whilst he carried them away out to the box in the little back yard, Dolly softly brushed up the grate with the old stump of a brush that they had found inside the fender.

"I wish we'd got some black-lead," remarked Raymond, when he came in and critically surveyed the results of Dolly's brushings; "but I can't see any anywhere."

"Wouldn't ink do?" asked Dolly. "I fink there is some in that bottle on the shelf."

"Capital!" whispered Raymond, going to get this

excellent substitute. A few drops were poured on the bars, hobs, grate, etc., and then Ray and Dolly polished vigorously.

"There, that really does look much nicerer now," said Dolly. "We have only got to tweep the floor."

A broom and an old dustpan were soon found, and whilst Raymond swept, Dolly held the dustpan in front of him. Oh, the dust it was terrible! About every three minutes the children had to go outside, nominally to throw the contents of the dustpan away, but in reality to obtain a breath of fresh air to prevent themselves from being choked. They had gone out for the fifth time, and were leaning against the cottage wall, Ray with his broom over his shoulder and Dolly holding the dustpan, when a carriage came rolling by.

"Oh, dear children, what *are* you doing?" exclaimed Mrs. Ellerton, as the carriage stopped and she and Mr. Ellerton got out. "What *is* the meaning of this?"

"Oh, it's all right, auntie. Poor Mrs. Grimes had no one with her, and now she's asleep we're cleaning out her room for her. It's awfully dirty, I can tell you; but I don't mind. She's one of the tenants, so I must do what I can for her, you know."

"Yes, my boy, yes; but it would have been better to have paid somebody to do this instead of doing it yourself," said Mr. Ellerton nervously; and Mrs. Ellerton added, "Oh, my darlings, how good of you to

think of it! but *why* didn't you come and tell me, instead of doing it yourselves? You know how gladly I would have sent some one down."

"But, Auntie Wosie, isn't God more pleased and made happier when we do fings for him our own selves? We 'magined it was like working for him; and I didn't mind the dust a bit, though it was weally dweadful."

"Yes, dearie; but God does not want little children to attempt what is beyond their powers, even with the best of motives. You could take the pudding down very nicely, but a good strong girl could do the cleaning much better; and as you have money, you could pay her for her work, which would be like giving the money to God."

"I see, auntie," said Ray. "I *was* a duffer never to have thought of that. Why, of course Jane could have got up a heap more dirt than we could; her arms have got such big muscles in them."

"But we twied, auntie," said Dolly's soft voice; "and we blacked the gwate quite clean with some ink."

Mrs. Ellerton and her husband could not help laughing, and then she said, "Well now, darlings, I'll promise to have all this seen to at once; so take off those aprons and trot off as fast as you can. That's right! Now shut the door softly;" and after some good-bye kisses the little pair started off home hand in hand.

X.

THE YOUNG SQUIRE'S BIRTHDAY.

THE sun rose with unwonted brilliance on the 19th of September, the young squire's eighth birthday, and the day fixed for the school feast at the Hall—two most important events in the quiet history of Winsdale. In the morning Raymond had received several presents, chief amongst them being a silver watch and chain, and a small, light air-gun, a weapon he had often longed for. After breakfast he and Dolly wandered forth together into the park, to watch the putting up of the various swings, see-saws, etc., that were being prepared for the amusement of the forty children expected, and they were there soon joined by Mr. Ellerton, who had come down from the house on purpose to decide upon the exact spot where Mr. Punch and Mrs. Judy should take up their abode.

The young squire was as proud and happy as a little lad could be in helping, as he called it, with the preparations. He worked away with a will, and many were the journeys backwards and forwards that

he and Dolly made to fetch things needed, especially when it came to placing all the good things for the feast upon the table. At last everything was ready —nothing more remained to be done, except for the young folks to be smartened up by Mrs. Nurse.

"I say, Dolly Dot," said Ray, as they were walking leisurely up to the house, "don't you think the youngsters will like those tarts? Why, I declare it's just worth while to be rich so as to get them such a stunning lot! O Dolly, Dolly, do you—" And then the boy stopped and broke into a merry peal of laughter.

"What's the matter, Way? I likes to know the weason why when you laughs like that?"

"O Dolly, it's only it just popped into my head about that greengage tart at Dove Cot, and how we stuffed it up! I *was* so mad with that cook, and *so* determined you should have some, that I forgot all about there being any harm or wrong in it until auntie told me afterwards. It *was* exciting though at the time, wasn't it, Dolly?"

"Why, yes, Way; but I 'spects the children will like their tart better, 'cause, you see, they won't want to go under the table after they've eaten it! You wemember I said that we were just like Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden under the bushes! Oh, dear, dear! and auntie never has given me any tilk 'tockings with leetle holes in them all this long time."

"Oh yes, I remember," replied Ray. "But, hullo! we must hurry up. Look! there's nurse beckoning to us from the window."

The feasting is over until tea-time, and the children are scattered about enjoying to their hearts' content all the amusements provided for their entertainment. Mr. and Mrs. Ellerton, Raymond and Dorothy, wander about amongst them, and with a few friends to help, look after the young people, so that none are left to feel themselves neglected. The swings and see-saws are greatly appreciated; Punch and Judy have already given their performances to an admiring audience, when suddenly the ringing of a bell announces that the hour has come for the sports to commence. The merry-making and laughter over these can hardly be described. There were running races; there were hopping and walking races; three-legged races; wheel-barrow races—in fact, all sorts of competitions for boys. Nor were the girls forgotten; for they had skipping races, hoop races, steady-hand races (which meant carrying small pails of sand without spilling any), and many other similar contests to take part in. The greatest mirth was perhaps provoked by the final contest of all, open to boys and girls alike; for the attitudes of those taking part in it were so comical that the gravest person could not have refrained from laughter. A large light wheel was fixed into a pivot on a high stand on a small table, and to the spokes were fastened by long threads sticks of chocolate and

sugar-candy, and sweets of various kinds at intervals, some hanging lower than others. The wheel was given a gentle push round, and the children had to run underneath with hands behind their backs, and try to catch a goody with their mouths. Three ran at a time, and the first that took the tempting bait stopped the wheel, and the others lost their chance. Finally, the successful ones had to try against each other for the prize.

Next came the distribution of prizes. The squire himself was prize-giver to the boys, and had a cheery smile and a pleasant word for each lad. Dorothy, perched on a table, gave theirs to the girls, each of whom made her a courtesy, and said, "Thank you, missie." At first, wee Dolly thought that it was the correct thing for her to courtesy too, so when the lucky competitor came up the little figure on the table gave a most demure bob down. At last her aunt, who stood by her side, told her she need not do so, and she satisfied herself with saying gravely, "There's a pwesent for you, 'cause you wun the wace, like a good girl!"

Soon again the bell sounded, and before long the crowd of hungry children were seated round the long table enjoying a most excellent tea. Raymond and his little sister helped to wait on their guests, and carried round dishes of buns, cake, and bread and jam, until all were supplied. It was wonderful how the good things were appreciated, and the number of

mugs of tea with lots of sugar in them that vanished was simply astonishing. But at last even the hungriest of the company were satisfied. One little urchin when asked if he would like any more, replied in slow, solemn tones, "Well, ma'am, I've 'ad five mugs o' tea, four 'elps o' bread and jam, five buns, and three cakes; but maybe, if I shakes myself a bit, I'll manage another bun!"

Grace and "God Save the Queen" had been sung, and the children, after giving three lusty cheers for their young host and hostess, and three more for Mr. and Mrs. Ellerton, were being marshalled into order, ready for their march homewards, when Mr. Ellerton made a request, in Raymond's name, that they would walk past the front entrance to the Hall on their way back to the village. This was of course acceded to, and there, under the portico, the astonished children found the young squire awaiting them, and his little sister, with a red plush cloak with a hood to it drawn over her golden curls that made her look for all the world like the pictures of Red Riding-Hood, standing by his side. When the children approached, Dolly handed to her brother something from a little basket she was holding; and saying to each child, "Good-night: I hope you have enjoyed yourself," Ray put into its hand a tiny pink envelope, which safely enclosed a sixpence, adding, "That's from us—Dolly and me—to buy anything you like, you know."

All things, however delightful, come to an end at

last, and so it was that the 19th of September 1877 came to its close, and a tired little couple entered the house and wended their way to the drawing-room, where they seated themselves on a low ottoman to await the arrival of their uncle and aunt to bid them good-night, they having walked to the park entrance to watch the procession of school children out of sight. It was twilight now, and Dorothy's tiny hand crept softly and confidingly into her brother's.

"Hasn't it been a bootiful, happy day, Way? Oh, and do you know, Way, I've only been naughty once all the whole long day! I've just been wemembering it to myself."

"That's good news, Dolly Dot; but how was it you even let one giant bother you?"

"Oh, it was all my own fault, Way, 'cause I wanted my pink sash on, and nurse made me have my blue, and so I stamped my foot just a leetle bit, and told her she was a 'horrid unkind old thing.' Of course, I was awfully solly after, you know."

"Ha! ha! Dolly," laughed Ray; "that was Giant Self-Will had got hold of you. Oh dear! he is a *terrible* plague to me too awfully often, for I do *love* having my own way."

"But, Way, he wouldn't come to you now you're eight, would he?"

"Why, of course he would, and try to catch hold of me tighter than ever, too. Why, uncle says he comes to quite grown-up people, and all the other

giants plague them too, just like us, if they don't win victories over them."

Dolly was silent a minute or two, absorbed in thought, then she said,—

"But, dear, dear Way, when you're twenty-one—a weal big man who can do all he wants—will the giants weally and twuly come to you then?"

"Yes, little one," said Mr. Ellerton's quiet voice, as he entered the room; "but I trust Ray will fight the good fight, and come out a victor in the strife. 'He that overcometh shall inherit all things, and I will be his God, and he shall be my son,' is the wonderful promise; so Ray has the hope of obtaining possession of far more than Winsdale for his very own if he continues to wage war against the giants with all his heart and soul."

"Well, Uncle Fred, I know one thing: I don't believe I should ever have won a victory over any of them at all—no, not one—if you and Aunt Rosie, and, yes—and Cousin Vivian, too, had not helped me."

"Then, after all, guardians are of some use, dear boy," said Mr. Ellerton, smiling; "so you will not be sorry to hear the news that—"

"O Cousin Wivian! my fwiend, my fwiend!" suddenly interrupted Dolly, rushing with a cry of delight into the arms of a tall figure standing in the doorway. "I didn't know you would come back so soon."

"I did not know it myself, little woman, until I

actually was on the way, and I certainly had not looked forward to such a welcome as this.—Take care, Raymond, old fellow! My poor arm will be off if you shake my hand much more!"

An hour later nurse, having safely tucked up Miss Travers for the night in her pretty, cosy crib, was following Master Travers as he sauntered leisurely up the broad staircase, humming softly to himself the following lines:—

"When you've work to do, boys,
Do it with a will;
They who reach the top, boys,
First must climb the hill.

"Standing at the foot, boys,
Gazing at the sky,
How *can* you get up, boys,
If you never try?"

THE END.

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